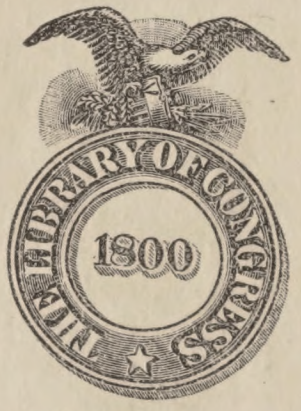

Class PZ3

Book .A469M

Copyright No.

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

586
1061

MY CAPTIVE

By J. A. ALTSHELER.

My Captive.
12mo. Cloth, $1.25.

The Wilderness Road.
A Romance of St. Clair's Defeat and Wayne's Victory. 12mo. Cloth, $1.50.

In Circling Camps.
A Romance of the American Civil War. 12mo. Cloth, $1.50.

A Herald of the West.
An American Story of 1811-1815. 12mo. Cloth, $1.50.

A Soldier of Manhattan,
And his Adventures at Ticonderoga and Quebec. 12mo. Cloth, $1.00; paper, 50 cents.

The Sun of Saratoga.
A Romance of Burgoyne's Surrender. 12mo. Cloth, $1.00; paper, 50 cents.

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

My Captive

A NOVEL

BY

J. A. ALTSHELER

AUTHOR OF

IN CIRCLING CAMPS, THE WILDERNESS ROAD, ETC.

35

New York
D. Appleton and Company
1902

THE LIBRARY OF
CONGRESS,
TWO COPIES RECEIVED
MAY. 23 1902
COPYRIGHT ENTRY
Jan. 21. 1901
CLASS a XXc. No.
1466
COPY B.

PZ 3
.A469M

COPYRIGHT, 1902
BY D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

All rights reserved

Published May, 1902

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	A Trying Situation	1
II.	Keeping a Prisoner	13
III.	The Merit of a Good Horse	28
IV.	Supper and Song	46
V.	A Change of Front	58
VI.	In a State of Siege	78
VII.	The Temper of Old Put	94
VIII.	Julia's Revenge	115
IX.	Two and a Horse	131
X.	Swords in the Twilight	150
XI.	Harley Hall	173
XII.	A Shadow at a Banquet	194
XIII.	A Vision of the Fire-Light	211
XIV.	An Unexpected Friend	227
XV.	As Seen in a Dream	242
XVI.	In Morgan's Camp	257
XVII.	The Battle	266
XVIII.	Looking Ahead	280

MY CAPTIVE

CHAPTER I

A TRYING SITUATION

I LOOKED at the prisoner, and I was vexed by doubt. With a battle on one side of him and a woman on the other, what is a man to do? She returned my gaze with great, pure eyes, which seemed to say I was a villain, a monster; yet I had been doing my exact duty, that of a faithful soldier in the cause of the Continental Congress and freedom, while she —a woman, a girl—had presumed to turn from the things for which God intended her and to meddle with war. I was more than vexed—I was angry: angry at her for attempting such a task, and angry at myself for being forced into a situation so full of troubles.

On the right, in the fringe of woods a

quarter of a mile away, the last rifle-shot had been fired, and its echo was speeding across the far hills. The powder flashed no more, and the smoke rose in lazy coils over the ground where men had fought and some had died. The victors, the captured detail with them, were riding away. I almost fancied I could hear the beat of their horses' hoofs, and the dead, I knew, lay with faces upturned to the sun, waiting there until the last trump should call them to rise again. And here was I, an atom, left in the drift of the armies, cut off from my comrades, and alone with this girl.

The horses shifted about uneasily, stamped their feet, and once mine raised his head and neighed, as if in truth he heard the beating hoofs of the galloping detachment. He knew that his comrades too were leaving him, though I cannot call it a desertion intended by either horse or man.

The girl's look of reproach turned to one of inquiry. She sat on a log, her little riding-whip hanging idly in her hand. For the first time I took note of her face—the delicate but

firm moulding of each feature; the clear depths of her dark-blue eyes; the bronze gold of her hair, clustering in tiny curls around her forehead; the rose-red of her cheeks, like a flush; her lithe, strong young figure. Why is it that when God wishes to make women especially wicked and troublesome he makes them beautiful?

"Well, you rebel," she said, "when do you propose to set me free?"

"When you give your word of honour that you will tell Cornwallis nothing about the strength of Morgan's forces and our present movements."

"That I will not do."

"Then you remain my prisoner."

Yet a fool were I even to have taken her word of honour. What woman has any regard for the truth in military matters? If she should find a chance, she would certainly give information likely to bring Cornwallis, as well as Tarleton, on Morgan.

"I think it enough for Englishmen themselves to fight us without sending their daughters too against us," I said.

"My father did not send me," she said quickly; "I came of my own accord."

"So much the worse," I replied.

But nothing was to be gained by standing there and talking. Besides, it is never well for a soldier to dispute with his prisoner. A captor should bear himself with dignity and reserve. I would show my quality.

I untied the horses and led them to the log on which she was sitting.

"Get up!" I said curtly and in a tone of command.

The natural rose flush of her cheeks deepened a little.

"You speak as if you were my master," she said.

"That is just what I am—for the present," I replied. "Mount your horse at once."

She gave me a sidewise look from eyes that flashed, but she stood upon the log.

"This log is too low, and the saddle is too high," she said.

I stepped forward and held out my hand to assist her.

"Don't touch me, you rebel!" she cried, and leaped lightly into the saddle.

I felt hurt.

"I wish you wouldn't call me a rebel," I said.

"Why?"

"It's impolite."

"But it's true."

"Well, perhaps it is in a way, and in a way too I am proud of it. Are you proud of your king?"

"Yes."

"It doesn't take much to arouse English pride."

"You will think more of him when the war is over. It will pay you to do so."

"Meanwhile we shall wait until then."

"What do you purpose to do with me—keep me a prisoner?"

"It is my misfortune."

"The courtesy of a rebel."

"I shall take you to General Morgan."

"Then Tarleton will rescue me. Your Morgan cannot stand before him."

I was afraid that she spoke the truth. We

were outnumbered, and, besides, more than half our force were raw militia. The odds were great against us, and knowing it, I did not reply to her taunt.

While we were talking she sat in the saddle with the easy seat of a good horsewoman. I held my mount loosely by the bridle. She was twiddling the whip in her hands. Suddenly she leaned over and lashed my horse across the eyes with her whip. The blow was given with all her might, and the startled animal reared, jerked the bridle out of my hand, and ran away.

"Good-bye, Mr. Rebel!" she shouted, and drawing her whip across her own horse galloped off in the opposite direction.

I believe I swore. I was angry and alarmed too, for this girl, with her messages and accurate news about us, was a formidable enemy, escaped, who might cause the destruction of the entire army of the south and the loss of all the southern colonies. I drew a pistol, it being my idea to kill the horse, but it was a shot that I could not risk. I thrust the weapon back in my pocket and ran after

my horse. He was thirty or forty yards away, half-mad with rage and pain, his bridle swinging beside him.

I am a very good runner, but I do not claim to be as swift as a horse. Nevertheless, I made speed as I ran after him, and I whistled and shouted with a vigour that must have convinced him of my intentions. I looked back once, and the girl and the horse she rode were growing smaller as they sped over the desolate and unfenced fields. My need of a horse too was growing more pressing. Mounted, there was hope; afoot, there was none.

I whistled all the calls that a friendly and well-treated horse should know, and meantime did not neglect to run after him with the best speed that I could command. Presently he seemed to understand and to remember that I was not responsible for the blow. He slackened his pace, looked back over his shoulder at me, and whinnied. I whistled encouragingly, he whinnied again, and, remembering who I was, his best friend, came to a full stop, for he was a most intelligent ani-

mal. In half a minute I overtook him, leaped into the saddle, and turned his head about.

"Now, old horse," I cried, "you can gallop, but you gallop my way."

I wore my spurs, and I gave him a touch of the steel. That was enough, for he was always ambitious and proud of his speed, and away we flew over the fields after the disappearing girl. She was a full quarter of a mile ahead, and her figure was growing dim on the horizon. Another quarter of a mile and she would be in the woods, where the concealment of the trees would enable her to elude my pursuit. Moreover, these English girls are often daring horsewomen, and even at the distance I could see that she rode like a trooper. But I knew the country and she did not, and I hoped to secure from it some chance that would enable me to overtake her.

I encouraged my horse. I did more than encourage—I appealed to his pride and sense of gratitude. I reminded him how I had ridden him all the way from the Hudson when I came south with Greene; how I had tended him and cared for him and fed him, often when

I was compelled to go hungry myself. I appealed to him now not to let that fugitive escape when so much depended on her capture, when I should be eternally disgraced, and he with me, if we permitted ourselves to be tricked and outwitted at such a time by one red-cheeked English girl.

He was a sensible animal, and he understood. He said nothing, not even a little snort, but his stride lengthened, and the swift and regular beat of his hoofs on the turf was music.

"Good horse, Old Put, good lad!" I said. I had named him Put, after Old Put, the famous Connecticut general, because he was so reliable and steady. He shook his ears slightly as a sign that he would do his best for me, having no time to say more, and ran a little faster. I kept a sharp watch for stones and holes in the ground, having no mind to risk a fall, which might ruin all, and nursed my comrade's strength, for on land as well as sea a stern chase is a long one.

The figure of the girl and the horse she rode was growing larger; good proof that I

was gaining, which was not enough, however, for I might continue to do so, and yet she could elude me in the woods, unless I was close upon her when she reached them. Her long hair had fallen down and was streaming behind her like a ribbon of spray with the sunshine on it, but I was willing to give that yellow hair a jerk just then could I put my hands on it.

"Steady, Put!" I said to my faithful comrade. "Do you see that girl with the yellow hair? Yes? Well, note the horse that she is riding, a common troop-horse, clumsy, ill-bred, no pedigree. Are you going to let yourself be beaten by him?"

His ears wagged violently, and he ran a foot to the second faster. We struck a piece of beautiful turf, evidently an old field left to itself until it could recover its fertility, and with the soft grass deadening and easing his footfalls Old Put raced for life. I could almost count the yards we gained, and still she was not in the forest. She did not look back until then, and it was a hasty glance, followed by a quick lashing of her mount. I judged

that she too noticed the gain and would now be unmerciful to her horse. I was exultant, willing to boast of it, and I shared my feelings with Old Put.

"Notice that yellow-haired girl again, Put," I said. "When we catch her this time we shall take care that she does not serve us such a trick again. If we cannot trust an Englishman, Put, how on earth can we put any faith in an English woman?"

Put received a slight slash once from the sabre of an Englishman who, offering to surrender to me, had tried to back out of it, and he knew what I meant. For the first time he uttered a slight snort, called one new muscle into play, and we steadily shortened the distance between us and the girl.

She would have got into the wood a few moments later, but she abruptly reined in her horse, turned him half about, and galloped off to the left. I guessed the trouble at once. The heavy rains often wash great gullies in our South Carolina soil, and a kind Providence, wishing to oblige me, had placed one of these in her way. It was equal to a gain of

two hundred feet without an effort, and I turned Old Put at once into the course she was taking.

"Don't you see, Put," I said, "that the Lord is on our side, and she and that burnt-brown cob of hers, who has passed most of his life hitched to a sutler's wagon, will be delivered into our hands?"

Old Put fairly neighed, his first real expression of triumph. He was as sure of the victory now as I, and I had confidence in the judgment of my old comrade.

"Stop! stop!" I shouted to the girl. "If you don't stop, I'll shoot!"

I had a long-barrelled horse-pistol, which I drew and flourished magnificently. I was within hearing though not shooting range, and I trusted that I should be able to frighten her into yielding.

She did not stop. She had worn her whip into shreds, and thin red streams of blood zigzagged across the horse's sides, but she pounded on with the stump. I felt a genuine pity for her horse, hack though he was, but none for her.

CHAPTER II

KEEPING A PRISONER

No more gullies thrust themselves across the way, and the girl was within twenty feet of the wood. She took another hurried look at me, and seeing my rapid gain, alarm appeared on her face. She drew a little toy pistol from the cloak she wore and levelled it at me, or at least that seemed to be her intention. I call it a toy pistol, because I, a full-grown soldier, would have felt deep shame had I been caught with such a weapon in my possession. She pulled the trigger, and the bullet cut the uncomplaining air somewhere, but not in my neighbourhood. This bombardment cost her at least twenty feet of the distance between us, but she thrust the terrible weapon back in her cloak and galloped on, with Old Put thundering at her heels. Then she was into the wood, and I was not far behind,

shouting to her to stop, telling her that I would surely overtake her and she was merely wasting the breath of both our horses and our own. Still she paid no heed, guiding her horse between the trees and through the bushes with considerable skill.

But, seeing the wood thicken presently, I was tempted to laugh. It was obvious now that the end of the race had come and I was the winner. The forest became so dense, the bushes clustering in thickets and the vines interlacing from tree to tree, that it formed an impenetrable wall. What I had feared would help her was my best ally.

She stopped short and sat stiffly on her horse, her back turned to me. I wondered if she would draw that amazing pistol again and threaten me with it, but she made no such attempt, evidently having reached wisdom at last. She dropped the stump of her switch on the ground and kept the back of her head towards me. Some beams of sunshine came through the tall trees and gleamed across the long curls of tawny gold, tingeing them for the moment as if with fire.

I rode up by her side, and then, as she seemed to ignore me, I asked Old Put to take me around in front of her. There I could see her face. It was pale, sad, and reproachful, and a tear ran down either cheek. For the moment I felt a little pity despite her perverse nature and all the trouble she had given me.

"I am sorry I have to do this," I said.

"Sorry for what?" she asked.

I saw that I had made a mistake. One should always be polite to a woman, but never apologetic.

"That I had to overtake you," I replied.

"Yours is the better horse," she said, wiping away the tears with an angry little brush of the hand. "I like to ride, and I always enjoy a good race. That was the reason I challenged you to it, though I did not know you had such a good mount."

This was a new view of the case, but I had a thought, or, rather, a reflection.

"It was a good race," I said, "but wasn't that a false start?"

"How so?"

"Didn't you take an advantage?"

"I was entitled to it. I am a woman."

"So women expect to carry that rule even into warfare?"

"Certainly."

I was glad I had never been forced to wage war with one of the feminine sex before, and hoped never to meet the necessity again. One likes to stick to the rules in military matters, and then he has some idea what to expect.

"The horses are very tired," I said.

"They look like it," she replied.

The poor animals were panting, and their coats were damp. I took the reins of her horse from her hand and held them firmly in mine.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"I think I'd better hold the bridles of both," I said. "Will you please dismount?"

I set her a good example by jumping down myself. She could not say that the prisoner was compelled to walk while the captor rode. I stepped forward to assist her, but again she refused my help, and sprang to the ground unassisted.

Old Put gazed angrily at the girl who had struck him. Then he snorted with triumph and looked contemptuously at the other horse. The latter seemed to be ashamed of himself, and his attitude was apologetic. But he had done his best, and therefore should not have been blamed.

"Come," I said, "we will get out of this wood and walk back across the fields. Keep by my side. I shall watch you; I do not want any more treachery."

I spoke with great sternness, as the mite of pity I felt when I saw the tears was gone. She obeyed with surprising meekness and walked beside me, while I led the horses, holding both bridles in one hand. I was glad that I had been so sharp with her, and I saw now it was the proper way with rebellious women. A man has only to show towards them a stern, unyielding temper, and they submit at once. She was crushed, and again that mite of pity rose up in my breast, for nearly always we feel a trace of sympathy for those whom we have vanquished.

Her head drooped, there was a faint ap-

peal in her eyes, and her walk showed weariness. She seemed to have forgotten that her hair was loose down her back, as she let it hang in long curls of gold, burnished where the sunshine fell upon it, dark in the shadow.

The yellow of the sun was deepening into red, a sign that the afternoon was waning, and I was anxious about the future, for which, like a good soldier, I felt it my duty to provide. She must have seen the care in my face, for she asked:

"Are you thinking how we shall reach General Morgan?"

"General Morgan or some one else."

"Is it far to his camp?"

"I cannot say. I do not know where he is. The American camp just now is of a shifting character."

"To keep out of Tarleton's way, I suppose?"

"Either that or to find him."

Then she seemed to repent of her gibe at our running away from the British.

"But General Morgan is a brave man, I have heard," she said.

That warmed my heart.

"He *is* a brave man," I replied, "and, what is more, he is a fine soldier and general."

"What a pity he is not on the right side!"

"Let's not quarrel about that again."

I thought I could afford to be generous, my situation was so superior to hers.

After that we walked along in silence for several minutes. The red tint of the sun deepened; faint shadows appeared in the blue velvet of the sky.

"I want to ask you one question," she said presently.

"There is nothing to prevent your asking it."

"But I want an answer, direct and correct."

"If it does not interfere with the progress of the campaign."

"I don't think it will do that."

"What is it?"

"What is your name?"

I laughed. It had never occurred to me before to tell her.

"It is true," I said, "that we have not had

an introduction, though we are seeing a good deal of each other's society, but it is not too late. My name is Philip Marcel."

"Why, that sounds like French, and I thought you were an American."

"Both are true. I am an American, and the name Marcel used to be French. I am of French descent partly, and I may have British blood too, though I shall not boast of it. There are many of us in South Carolina."

"But I thought you were Northern. You said you had been serving in the Northern army of the rebels——"

"The patriots!"

"Well, the patriots, then, under Mr. Washington."

"General Washington!"

"Well, General Washington."

"Yes, I have been serving in the Northern army of the patriots under General Washington, but he has sent me south with General Greene and the others, mostly Southerners themselves, to redeem this part of the country from the British raiders. I am a South Carolinian."

She relapsed into silence again, and I imitated her example. I had enough of importance anyhow to think about without talking to a girl, an enemy, but presently I remembered.

"Pardon me," I said, "but you have forgotten something too."

"What is it?"

"You have not told me your name."

"That is true, and the introduction cannot be complete until I do."

"Certainly not."

"My name is Howard."

"Howard! What Howard?"

"Julia Howard. My father is John Sinclair Howard, major in Tarleton's legion. I was born in Devonshire, England, and I am here with my father, having nobody else to look after me, until such time as these rebellious colonies are put down and restored in their allegiance to their lawful sovereign, George III, King of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, God bless him!"

I thought that God could find something better to do than to waste his time blessing

King George, a fat German blockhead, but I kept the thought to myself just then.

"Then, mark my words, Miss Julia Howard, of Devonshire, England," I said, "you have come here to stay."

"I don't believe it."

"It is a prediction; it will come true."

Her look was full of unbelief, and we relapsed into silence again. The shadows grew in the sky. The sun blazed like fire, and my old trouble about the future came back.

The horses ceased to pant and walked now with springy steps, their weariness gone. Old Put thrust his nose under my arm and whinnied gently. He was talking in the language that we two understood. I rubbed his soft nose.

"Yes, old fellow," I said to him, "you have done your duty well, as you always do. We'll stop soon, and then I'll find you something to eat."

He whinnied again and rubbed his nose on my sleeve; he understood.

"He looks like a good horse," said the girl.

"Never a better," I replied, and with emphasis.

"I like a good horse," she said.

"So do I. That's the reason I'm so fond of Old Put."

"I wonder if he would be as friendly with me?"

"I don't know. He usually likes old friends best, but still he is a horse of fine taste."

Her evident admiration of Old Put appealed to me, and I thought I would give her the little compliment. Women like such things, and, again, I felt as if I could afford to be generous.

She put her hand upon his nose and stroked it gently. It was a white, well-shaped hand, with pretty, tapering fingers. Old Put must have admired it. He assisted in the rubbing task, swaying his nose gently to and fro, and he whinnied once, softly, after his custom when he was talking to me. He seemed to have forgotten the blow she had given him.

"See," she said triumphantly, "he has found a new friend, a good friend, and he

knows it. He is almost as fond of me as he is of you."

I was surprised, greatly surprised. Heretofore Old Put had always proved himself to be an excellent judge of character, and now he was putting his trust in this English girl, who had shown herself to be unworthy of any confidence whatever. Poor Put! Another masculine dupe! He was growing old; he was falling into his dotage. I felt a certain sadness at these signs of mental decay in my faithful horse. But they marched on, his silky nose pressed closely against her arm, and meanwhile the sun was sinking and the shadows were deepening and lengthening.

"I do not think it necessary for us to walk any more," I said. "The horses are now thoroughly rested from their race and are willing to do their part, which is to carry us."

She looked at her ugly brown hack in some dismay.

"He's such a rough traveller, I believe I'd rather continue walking," she said.

He certainly had a most irregular, jumping kind of gait, which would make him an

unpleasant mount for anybody, but there seemed to be no recourse. Horses were not running loose around us for me to catch.

"But we can't help it," I said. "We can ride slowly. If he misbehaves, use that switch you have picked up."

She walked steadily on.

"Now, if he were like this one," she said, stroking Old Put's nose, "I should be glad to ride again."

"Suppose I change the saddles, then," I said, "and let you ride Old Put?"

It was a great concession for me to make, but her appreciation of my horse touched me for the moment.

"Do you think he would let me?" she said, looking at Old Put doubtfully and timidly.

Now I was indignant. It was a slur upon the character of Put, one of the gentlest and best bred of horses, to insinuate that he would behave badly with a lady on his back.

"No man except myself has ridden him in years," I replied. "Perhaps no woman has ever ridden him at all, but that is no reason why one should not ride him now."

"But I am afraid," she protested again in timid fashion. All her courage seemed to have gone. Again I say you have only to be stern with a woman to keep her at your feet.

"Nonsense!" I said a little roughly. "We'll stop talking about this and do it at once."

I halted the horses and changed the saddles, while she looked doubtfully on. Old Put submitted like an angel, and I drew the girth tight. Then I continued:

"Now, if you would know what a real saddle-horse is, Miss Howard, just jump up there."

"Will you help me?"

Another proof of her subdued condition!

I held out my hand in most gallant fashion. She leaned on it a moment for support, and sprang into the saddle. Then, giving Old Put a cut with the switch which she had picked up, she galloped away.

"Good-bye, Mr. Marcel!" she shouted. "I ride the better horse now."

She turned Old Put's nose to the southwest, and away she went at the very best speed

of which my good horse was capable, and that was much. Her yellow hair flew in the wind, as before, like the streamers of a defiant battle-flag, and either with or without intent the red cap she wore was set rakishly and saucily on one side of her head.

CHAPTER III

THE MERIT OF A GOOD HORSE

I PAUSED, not to swear this time, but for a momentary reflection on the vanity of man and the deceitfulness of woman in taking advantage of it, and then I sprang upon the back of that old brown hack—confound him for an army mule without the ears!—and gave chase. I had no switch or whip, but I rowelled him and kicked him in the sides until I frightened him into a greater speed than he or any one else believed to dwell within his long frame. He gave a wild snort, and we plunged after the fleet girl, rocking and swaying like a boat in a stormy sea, but even with such exertion he could not compare with Old Put. Despite the anxiety of the moment, I noted his inferiority with some pride, but then I remembered how much depended upon the success of the pursuit, and continued to urge on my own mount.

Strive and strain as we could and ride and thump as I would with all my arms and legs, we lost ground rapidly. The girl turned her head once to look at me, and I thought I saw a look of triumph on her face, but I suppose it was my imagination, which was industriously tormenting me just then. I groaned at the certainty of her escape, and then hope seized me, for I remembered suddenly that I too had a trick to play. Old Put and I possessed a common language in which we often talked with perfect understanding. I put two fingers to my lips and blew between them a long, shrill whistle, that cut the air and travelled like the scream of a fife. It was a request, a command even, to him to stop and wait for me. He twisted his long neck in the manner of one listening, looking back at me to see what I meant, but he went on, though with slightly diminished speed, his manner indicating that he was uncertain what I had said.

The girl was belabouring him with the switch, which showed that she had noticed his decreasing gait. I whistled again, and as Old Put's pace sank to a trot she beat him

furiously. A third whistle, and Old Put, now in perfect accord with me, stopped stock still; not only that, but he faced about and neighed joyously. The girl threw the remains of her switch upon the ground and began to cry, not pitifully, but angrily, fiercely. I rode up slowly and held out my hand to Old Put, who rubbed his nose against it. He knew his master and best friend. Never had I beaten him, and now there were stripes and welts on his side where she had pounded him.

"Why did you not tell me what sort of a horse he was," she cried, "and then I would not have made myself look so ridiculous, sitting here as if I had been tied and waiting for you to come up?"

"Miss Howard," I replied in some astonishment, "do you expect me to show you the way to escape?"

"I do not expect anything from you, a rebel," she said. "Do not speak to me again."

All right; that suited me. I did not wish to talk to her. She used words only to inveigle me into some incautious mood. But

it was necessary for me to tell her to dismount in order that I might change saddles again, as I did not intend to give her another such chance. I did not offer to assist her, having had enough of that, but stood beside the brown hack, watching her with a look that was now strictly military.

"Why don't you help me down?" she said angrily. "Have you no courtesy for a lady?"

"You have declined such assistance from a rebel before," I replied to her unexpected question.

"And I decline again. You needn't offer it," she said abruptly, springing to the ground, when I had no thought of offering help.

As soon as she was off his back Old Put showed the greatest distrust of her and aversion. He shied as far away from her as my hold on his bridle would let him, and his big, dark eyes shone with wrath. I was glad that he had come back to his senses, and he, like I, should have known her thoroughly from the first and always.

"We don't intend to be deceived by her again, do we, old comrade?" said I to him.

He nodded his head in emphatic fashion, and his big eye winked intelligently. Her face flushed a little, but she took no other notice.

"Look well at this lady, Put," I said. "Do you note her?"

He nodded.

"She's English, we're Americans, and therefore she's an enemy and not to be trusted. Watch her well," I continued.

He nodded violently.

"Now, Miss Howard," I said severely, "I've changed those saddles, and they are ready for our use when we need them, but meanwhile we'll walk again, as we've tired our horses out for the second time, and all your fault too."

She said nothing, but walked on in the way which I had indicated, keeping eight or ten feet from me. She ceased to cry and gave her features a fixed and angry set.

I was troubled greatly. We had wasted so much time over her futile efforts to escape that the problem of a night's shelter grew more difficult and pressing, and I intended that

my attention should not be diverted from it again. Therefore I would take precautions. I drew from my pocket a long silk handkerchief, a trophy of the Monmouth campaign, which I had preserved with great care.

"Hold out your hands," I said.

"What would you do?" she asked, turning upon me a look of fire.

But I was firm. My experience was too great.

"Hold out your hands," I repeated. "I intend to bind them together. You play too many tricks."

"You are not a gentleman."

"You have told me that three or four times already. It won't bear further repetition."

"I will not submit to such a thing."

"Then I will have to use force, which will make it much more unpleasant for you."

I hated to do what I had planned. It was rude and severe, but then there are few who have had women prisoners like mine, and consequently there are few who are in a position to judge me. I prefer greatly to deal with

the regular forces, but in this case I had no choice, and so I strengthened my will and proceeded.

"Hold out your wrists," I repeated. "I shall not hurt you. I merely wish to keep you out of further mischief."

"I shall never forgive you," she said.

I could afford to laugh at such a threat.

"I trust that nobody will forgive me until I ask it," I replied.

She looked at me, her eyes full of rebellion. I thought she was going to raise her hand to strike me, but women are so changeable and uncertain. Instead she held out her hands meekly.

I bound her wrists together and noticed that they were white and well moulded. The handkerchief was soft and could not pain her at all, and, besides, her hands were secured in front of her and not behind her. She need feel no inconvenience, but she must realize that her opportunities for mischief were diminished vastly. Old Put looked at her with an air of triumph, as much as to say, "Now, miss, you are being punished, and punished deserv-

edly, for beating me so much." That seemed to be her own understanding of herself.

We resumed our march, the horses walking behind us. The rim of the sun was now meeting the rim of the earth, and the western skies were tinged with ruddy fire. In the east the misty gray of twilight was descending on field and forest, and the chill of night was creeping over everything. Even in our South Carolina latitudes the nights are cold in midwinter, and I shivered as a twilight wind, with a raw edge to it, swept over the plain.

There was a heavy cloak hanging at her saddle-horn, as she had not ventured upon her journey unprepared. I took it off and threw it over her shoulders. It fell below her waist like a greatcoat, and I buttoned it securely around her neck.

"You are a barbarian," she said.

"I know it," I replied, "but I do not intend to let you suffer more than is necessary for your own good. That is the kind of barbarians we are in this country."

The land was lone and desolate, for we were on the sterile slopes of the hills. It was

thinly peopled at the best of times, but now, raided incessantly by Tarleton's legion, which knew no mercy to anything, whether animate or inanimate, and plundered too by wild bands which claimed to belong to either army as the occasion served, and perhaps belonged to neither, the people had fled to securer regions, where one side or the other was master. Only those who have seen it know the sufferings of a country harried by opposing armies and predatory forces. I had hoped to find some friendly farmer bolder than the rest with whom my prisoner and I could obtain shelter, or if not that, at least an abandoned house which would give us a roof, but I saw no sign of a human face except our own, and no roof appeared either in the fields or among the trees. It was a solitude bleak and cold, and the declining sun, now half-way behind the earth, warned me that it would soon be time to stop. The darkness would be upon us, and in a land of hills, gullies, and no roads we could not travel well without light.

Despairing of such shelter as I had expected, I turned our course towards a thick

grove of trees rising like a great castle on the left. When we entered it, the shadows already made darkness there, and the night wind moaned among the dry branches of the trees. I saw the girl shiver, and again I felt pity for her in spite of all that she had tried to do, though I lost none of my distrust and caution.

Almost in the centre of the grove was a small open space, sheltered from the rush of cold air by the great trees which grew so thickly around it. It seemed to me the likeliest spot we could find for a camp. I hitched the horses to boughs and took from my pocket a small flask of that cheer which a good soldier seldom neglects. I drew the stopper and handed it to the girl.

"Drink a little of this," I said. "You must if you do not expect to catch your death of cold."

"I would if I could," she replied, "but I cannot while my hands are tied."

"I had forgotten the handkerchief," I continued, "but I don't think we'll need it any longer. You have been warned sufficiently."

I unbound her wrists and replaced the handkerchief in my pocket.

"But don't forget," I said, "that this handkerchief is an evidence that I have put my mark upon you and that you belong to me—that is, you are my prisoner until I choose to give you up."

Her face flushed.

"I will not endure such talk," she replied, "from a rebel who within six months may be hanged by his outraged king for treason."

"You can't escape it," I said, "and the king can't hang me before he catches me. It's a long way from London to South Carolina, and I hear the king is fat and lazy and suffers from seasickness."

But she drank the whisky, just a little of it, though enough to put more sparkle in her eye, and handed the flask to me without a word of thanks. Then she sat down on a fallen tree and looked idly in front of her, as if she had no interest whatever in anything.

I gathered up armfuls of the dry brush and tossed them into a heap, which I ignited with the flint and steel I always carried. The

fire blazed up rapidly and snapped as it bit through the wood. Its merry crackling drowned the desolate moan of the wind, and the long red ribbons of flame and the fast-forming bed of live coals threw out a kindly heat that fended off the chill of the night. Even the girl, angry and humiliated as she seemed to be, felt the influence of the light and warmth, and edged along the log until she was much closer and the fire could shine directly upon her face. Old Put was frank in his appreciation, coming to the full length of his tether and wagging his head in a manner that said to me as plain as day, "You have done well." Even the stupid brown hack understood and imitated Old Put's example.

Higher rose the fire and drove back the shadows, but the darkness was now rolling up to the circle of light, and, beyond the sparkle of the flames, began to rise like a wall. The sun was gone, and a faint, fading pink tint in the west marked the way his flight took him. Over all the world the twilight drooped, and the winter wind mourned the dead day.

"Are there ghosts in the forest?" suddenly asked the girl.

"None that I ever heard of," I said.

"It is so unlike England."

"How?"

"So much wilder."

I had heard of their forests there, or rather what they call forests—some acres of trees, with the undergrowth cut away and the lawns shaven, every rod patrolled by keepers or workmen, a mere plaything of a forest—but here in America are the real forests, just as nature made them, the desolate wilderness through which the wild animals howl, while the lone wind plays its song on the branches or leaves of the trees. This is the real forest, a place in which man becomes about as big as a cork on the sea. Never the lone hunter, though fifty years his home, fails to feel its immensity and desolation. The girl drew the edges of her cloak a little more tightly and moved as close to the fire as the end of the log would allow her.

"If you will permit me," I said, "I will give you a better seat than that by the fire."

She rose without a word, and I rolled the log well within the warmth of the blaze. She resumed her seat, and the firelight flickered and played over her face, tinting her cheeks with deep red and spangling her bronze-gold hair with patches of scarlet and crimson. The little red cap had been pulled securely down on her head, and, sitting there in the alternate light and darkness, her figure lithe and strong, she looked like some Saxon wood-nymph.

But I did not cease my good deeds. I call myself a forethoughtful trooper, and from the saddle-bags I carried across my saddle-bow I took a cold chicken, a piece of cold boiled ham, and some hard biscuits, a dinner fit for a prince, or rather an honest American citizen, which was better, in these hard times of war. To this royal collation I added a canteen well filled with water, remembered the stout little flask in my breast-pocket, and the repast was complete, all but the serving.

Her eyes sparkled at the sight of the good things. Wood-nymphs, Saxon or other, must eat.

"Let me carve the chicken," she said.

"You have neither a table, plates, nor a knife," I replied.

"This log will serve as a table, some of those clean dry leaves as plates, and you can lend me a knife."

"How could I lend you a knife, a weapon, after all the tricks you have tried to play upon me? You don't forget this, do you?"

I took the little toy pistol with which she had tried to shoot me out of my pocket and held it up before her, but she laughed. Women don't seem to have any conscience, or at least they forget their crimes, which is convenient for their peace of mind.

"Give me the knife," she said, "and don't waste time. I'm hungry."

I distrusted her as much as ever, even more, but I opened the blade of my clasp-knife and handed it to her.

"A very good knife," she said, "but I have no doubt it was stolen from an Englishman. Ah, here it is—the name of an English maker on the blade!"

"It was not stolen!" I exclaimed indignantly. "I took it from him fairly at the

battle of Monmouth, where he fell into my hands."

"That, I suppose, is a good enough title for a rebel," she said, and began to carve the chicken.

It was a fine, fat chicken, beautifully roasted, and she showed that she knew how to carve, for she deftly clipped off a leg, which she held up before me.

"That looks fat and good to eat," she said, "and it's a fine chicken, but I've no doubt it was stolen from a loyal subject of King George."

"It's not true!" I exclaimed in some wrath. "He was a Tory farmer, I admit, but I did not steal the chicken. I took it before his eyes, and he never said a word."

"Afraid, I suppose; but it doesn't make any difference to you. It will taste just as good to a rebel. Here, take your piece on this big, clean leaf, and eat."

I obeyed. She carved off a portion for herself too, and ate with a good appetite. Then I handed her the canteen of water and told her to drink.

"Don't be afraid," I said. "I took that water out of a clear brook in the wilderness, and the land through which it flowed belonged to God, not to any Englishman or Tory."

"But how about the canteen?" she asked. "Did you steal that from any English soldier or take it by violence, which is worse?"

I showed her the name of the maker, a Boston man, upon it.

"A vile rebel town, the worst of them all," she said.

But she took a good drink from it, and when she handed it back to me I imitated her example. Then, as the fire crackled and blazed higher and the circle of light widened and the darkness beyond it thickened, we ate and drank, and I grew cheerful.

I had defeated every one of her attempts, and to-morrow I would find Morgan, give her into other hands and be rid of all my troubles; yet I was compelled to admit once again that she was very beautiful with the firelight flickering and playing over her face and hair, but all the world knows, as I have said, that the handsome women are the most dangerous,

the most cunning, and I was on my guard against any new attempt of hers to escape. Still, when I looked around at the blackness of the night and heard the sigh of the cold wind above the crackling of the fire, I did not think that she would dare to attempt it. I knew no woman would venture alone on a winter night into that uncanny wilderness, and, knowing it, I felt easy.

CHAPTER IV

SUPPER AND SONG

THE horses looked jealously at our supper. I was sorry for them, especially Old Put, whose great, intelligent eyes said in the purest English, "I too am hungry, master." But I could do nothing. I had no provender for horses, and so I told him to wait as best he could until morning, and I would find him something, if I had to rob a patriot farmer to do it. He bowed his head in resignation like the wise horse he was, while the brown hack, not so well bred, tugged at his bridle-rein and thrashed about until I threatened him with a big stick.

After the chicken the girl served the cold ham and drank from the canteen again. I did likewise. Moreover, I urged her to wet her lips at the flask a second time as a further precaution against cold, which she did literally and no more. I was liberal rather than

literal, as I was a soldier and knew its value. I took my blanket from my saddle-bow and urged her to wrap it around herself, but she said "No"; that her heavy cloak was sufficient, and she would not deprive me, even if I was a misguided rebel. I saw that she spoke truly, as her cloak was of the most ample character, and so, having no further compunction, I wrapped the blanket around me, Indian style, and, sitting down on the dry leaves in front of the fire, leaned my head against the log. She sat on the log at the other end, her head resting against a dead bough thrust straight up in the air. I had put the remains of the provisions back in my saddle-bags.

Triumphant, warm, well fed, my cheerfulness, my satisfaction with myself, increased. I stared into the bed of red coals and saw figures, pictures, there. Near the centre of the bed the coals fell into such shape that I could trace distinctly the epaulets of a general, and I knew those epaulets were for me. The coals crumbled into new shapes and built the house which was to be mine when

the war was victoriously over and I was ready to retire to it with my honours. She too seemed to be engaged in the same business, for she was staring with half-closed eyes into the dreamy coals.

"Why are you a rebel?" she asked. "Is it from pure perverseness? They say all you Americans are so."

"They tell many things about us in England that are not true," I replied, "and this is one of them. The English themselves have often been rebels, and their present royal family, one of the worst they have ever had—and they have had the Stuarts—was placed on the throne by a just rebellion."

"You must know," she replied, "that in England the character of the sovereign is nothing. It is the sovereign principle. The worse the sovereign, the better the court likes him."

We relapsed into silence and our study of the red coals. Old Put whinnied gently, raised his head, and gazed beyond the fire, as if he saw something in the darkness impenetrable to all but horse eyes.

"I'd better look to that," I said. "Old Put is not going to give a warning for nothing. He has a character to lose."

"A wild-cat, maybe," she suggested.

"Perhaps, but I'll see."

I rose, still keeping my blanket wrapped around me, and ordered her to stay where she was under pain of being bound again. She promised, and I believed that she would not stir from her position on the log. The darkness and the desolation were not inviting.

I walked out into the black bank of the night, but could neither see nor find anything. I made a complete circuit around the oasis of light from the fire, and all was peaceful and quiet. I returned to the log, ready to scold Old Put for giving a false alarm, but refrained, reflecting that he might be nervous and irritable, owing to his lack of food.

"What did you find?" asked the girl, looking at me with bright eyes.

"Nothing."

"I thought you wouldn't find anything. It was a wild-cat, or maybe a harmless little squirrel."

"Aren't you afraid of wild animals?"

"Not with such a brave rebel as you near me."

I opened my eyes a little wider and looked at her. It was the first time she had complimented me, even in that half-mocking way, and I was surprised.

"I thought you did not allow me the possession of any desirable quality whatsoever," I said.

"You are improving," she replied. "Perhaps it is due to my society. I may yet make you a loyal follower of King George and save you from the hangman."

I had my doubts about the "loyalty," which is a term devised for the protection of sovereigns in their crimes, but I said nothing just then. She too relapsed into silence. The heap of coals grew and glowed in the depths with deep crimsons and scarlets, throwing out a generous heat and wooing me to sleep. Despite my sense of caution and the efforts of my will, my eyelids drooped. The castles in the coals became more indistinct and wavered as if they were made of red mist.

Old Put whinnied again and raised his head high in the air, like one who listens. I was wide awake in an instant and on my feet a second time.

"Put," I said, "if I find that you have given another false alarm you shall have nothing to eat in the morning."

"I wouldn't bother about it," said the girl. "It's only a squirrel or a rabbit. Any horse would notice the passing of such an animal. Their senses are keener than ours."

She was growing very considerate of me!

But I searched the wood once more, and finding nothing returned to my comfortable place. Old Put was restless and shuffled about; but, angry at his idle alarms, I commanded him roughly to keep quiet, and he obeyed.

The girl was humming softly to herself, as if she were thinking of her far-away English home. I supposed she was lonely and homesick, and again some pity for her crept into my heart.

"Are you singing of your sweetheart?" I asked, meaning to cheer her.

"I have none," she replied.

"Not now, perhaps, but you will have some day."

"That is a different matter."

"What kind of a sweetheart would you choose?"

"A soldier, a gallant English soldier, one loyal to his king through all."

She continued to hum her little song. Something stirred in the wood, and Old Put, despite my previous command, whinnied and stamped his feet.

"Confound that beast, whatever it may be!" I said. "It must be a wild-cat attracted by the light of our fire."

"Let the wild-cat go," she said. "Listen, and I will sing you a song that will tell you what my future betrothed and husband shall be. It's an old Scotch song of devotion and loyalty, but we English sing it too, and like it as well as the Scotch. Dumbarton's Drums we call it."

"Sing," I said.

Then she sang:

" Dumbarton's drums beat bonnie O,
When they mind me of my dear Johnnie O !
How happy am I
When my soldier is by,
While he kisses and blesses his Annie O !
'Tis a soldier alone can delight me O,
For his graceful looks do invite me O !
While guarded in his arms
I'll fear no war's alarms,
Neither danger nor death shall e'er fright me O !

" My love is a handsome laddie O,
Genteel, but ne'er foppish or gaudy O !
Though commissions are dear,
Yet I'll buy him one this year,
For he'll serve no longer a cadie O !
A soldier has honour and bravery O,
Unacquainted with rogues and their knavery O !
He minds no other thing
But the ladies or the king,
For every other care is but slavery O !

" Then I'll be the captain's lady O !
Farewell, all my friends and my daddy O !
I'll wait no more at home,
But I'll follow with the drum,
And whene'er that beats I'll be ready O !
Dumbarton's drums sound bonnie O !
They are sprightly like my dear Johnnie O !
How happy I shall be
When on my soldier's knee,
And he kisses and blesses his Annie O ! "

Her voice was deep and true, and the old war ballad was music in my ears. As the melody rose and fell in the lonely night my eyes drooped again and my brain became dim with advancing slumbers, like a child soothed to sleep by the song of his mother. I was tired as a dog, I had ridden long and far and had worked much, and every nerve and muscle in me cried aloud for rest. But I roused myself as she finished and the last note of her song died in the darkness.

"That is a proper military song," I said, "and nobly sung, but I object to the sentiments of your hero. He minds no other thing but the ladies or the king. The ladies are all right, but no king. Leave the king out!"

Old Put was stamping his feet again.

"That's right, Put," I said. "Applaud the song, for it was well sung, though you and I, who are good Americans, don't altogether like the sentiments. That, I take it, is an old song of loyalty to the Stuarts. It is a singular thing to me how wholesome-minded English people can invest the Stuarts, whom they kicked out of their country, with so much ro-

mance and charm, when all history shows they were an utterly debased lot, and nobody knows it better than the English themselves."

"The sentiments of the song, king and all, are perfectly correct, and I'll sing that verse to you again."

She looked at me with a look half defiance, half a smile, and sang:

"My love is a handsome laddie O,
Genteel, but ne'er foppish or gaudy O!
Though commissions are dear,
Yet I'll buy him one this year,
For he'll serve no longer a cadie O!
A soldier has honour and bravery O,
Unacquainted with rogues and their knavery O!
He minds no other thing
But the ladies or the king,
For every other care is but slavery O!"

She sang it still more softly and gently than before, and, though my eyelids drooped again, I turned my gaze from the bed of coals to her face. The firelight played ruddily over her eyes and cheeks, and the expression there seemed tender and far-away, as if her thoughts had gone from this dark night and the war-torn fields of South Carolina to the green English meadows and peaceful sunshine.

When she finished, I raised my hands and clapped them together.

"Well done!" I said. "Well done!"

"Done well enough for us," said some one, and strong hands reached over the log and grasped me by the wrists. My languor and my sleepiness were gone in an instant, and I made a powerful effort to wrench myself loose, but I had been taken too suddenly. Three or four men flung themselves upon me, and I was crushed under a great weight, while the firm grip was still on my wrists. I managed to deal somebody a heavy kick and heard a grunt of pain, but in a few seconds I was overpowered, and, like a wise man, ceased to struggle further.

Singularly enough, one of my early thoughts in that moment was of relief that Old Put should prove to be a true prophet, having enjoyed such a good character in that respect so long. I was a fool not to take his warning more seriously. Then I wondered why the girl did not cry out at the sight of struggling men and the sound of oaths and blows, a violent medley usually very terrifying

to women. I caught one glimpse of her, and she was sitting on the log, her back against the upthrust bough, leaning upon it as lazily as if she were in a rocking-chair in a parlour. The firelight still played over her face and eyes, but the soft and tender expression which had pleased me was gone. Instead the look that she turned upon me was a mixture of dislike, malice, and triumph.

After meeting such a glance it was a relief to me to look another way and see who had captured me.

CHAPTER V

A CHANGE OF FRONT

"TIE him up well," said one. "These rebels are not to be trusted, even when they are bound."

I gave careful notice to the man who spoke, evidently the leader of the party. He was of large size, middle age, and truculent features. His most noticeable characteristic was his drooping eyelids, which would induce the casual observer to think he was fast asleep, though in reality he was wide awake. He was dressed in the uniform of a captain in the British army. I set him down as a partisan chief on a small scale. He had seven comrades, cast in the same mould as himself, all dressed in the uniform of British soldiers and rather wild of look.

They bound me securely and set me with my back to the log and my face to the fire, much in the position that I occupied while the

girl was singing. Confound her for lulling away my caution and suspicions in such a manner! I had no doubt now that she had seen the red uniforms of the men when first I went into the wood to seek the cause of the noise. I was a fool to let my distrust of her decrease for a moment.

"That was a complete job, Miss Howard," said the leader, "well done by everybody, and your part is the best done of all."

"You have rescued me from the hands of a rebel, Captain Crowder," she replied, "and I am back with my own people, for both of which I thank you."

I thought it was time for me to say something.

"It is true you have trapped me between you, Captain Crowder, for so I hear the lady call you," I said, "but I wouldn't exult, because the next chance might be mine, and it would hurt your feelings for me to pay you back."

"I don't know about any next chance for you," he replied, "because here in the South we generally hang rebels."

I did not reply to his threat, thinking I had said enough, and turned my head away. My glance fell now upon Old Put. His eyes were full of reproach to me. The I-told-you-so expression was there, and the I-am-sorry-for-you-and-myself look was mingled with it. "I will never lose faith in you again, best of all comrades!" I signalled back.

Captain Crowder, having seized me, also seized my camp, evidently with the intention of spending the night there. He posted one sentinel, while the others sat around the fire, making themselves comfortable. The girl occupied her old seat on the tree trunk, leaning against the projecting bough.

"Do you know where my father is, Captain Crowder?" she asked.

"With Tarleton," he replied.

"And where is Tarleton?"

"Hot on the chase of the rebel, Morgan, and his men."

"Can we overtake Tarleton by noon tomorrow?"

"Undoubtedly, for he has to go rather slowly, not knowing just where Morgan is.

He doesn't want to run past the game. Morgan's hard to catch, but when Tarleton once comes up with him there'll be an end to one rebel army."

I listened to this conversation with the closest attention and continued to listen while he described Tarleton's movements, force, and equipment. If I could escape him and the hangman's rope with which he had threatened me, this information would be of great value to our cause. I was glad that I had torn up, for the sake of precaution, the girl's letters and other written facts about us when I captured her, since she could rely now only upon speech. I waited for her to tell Crowder about me, but she said nothing on that point, and I reflected that her reticence was natural, as she would want to give her information herself to Tarleton, and thus secure all the credit, instead of letting the guerilla, Crowder, claim at least half of it.

Two of the men disappeared in the wood and returned in a few moments, leading the horses of the band, which they tethered to the trees near by. I guessed they had

seen the light of our fire at a distance, and, leaving their mounts there, had crept upon me.

"You will excuse us, Miss Howard, while we eat and drink a little," said Crowder. "We've ridden far to-day, and we're tired and hungry."

Their appearance was sufficient indication that they needed food and rest, as the grime of travel was thick upon them. They rummaged their haversacks and saddle-bags and produced bread and meat, which they began to eat greedily. They were absorbed like wild animals in their repast and paid no attention to anything else.

The girl rose and walked over to me. Reaching down, she seized the end of the silk handkerchief, which was projecting from my pocket, and jerked it forth. She threw it into the fire and watched it burn, the red heat gripping the delicate silk and converting it in a moment to ashes. Then she turned upon me a face of flame.

"You dared to bind me," she said—"you a rebel, and I an English woman, the daugh-

ter of a loyal English officer! You dared to insult me so!"

"And I presume that is the reason you burn the handkerchief with which I bound you," I said.

"Yes."

"Now that you have begun the job of burning, I suppose you would like to burn me too, as I am the man who tied the handkerchief, and I did so because you deserved it."

She was silent, but her cheeks were as red as ever.

"I congratulate you upon your rescue, your rescuers, your company," I said.

"They are loyal British soldiers."

"They wear the British uniform. Any ruffian and robber may do that."

"I have seen Captain Crowder himself in the army of Cornwallis. My father knows him, and I do too."

"You know his face, and that is all. He may be a good enough British soldier when he is with Cornwallis, but elsewhere he is anything that suits his purpose. He can pretend

to be American too. Look at him and his comrades now."

Every man had produced a bottle and was drinking deeply from it. The odour rose and was too strong to be swept away by the wind.

"Behold them," I repeated. "I congratulate you on your company."

They drank deeply and replaced the bottles in their pockets, where I was sure they were not destined to remain long. The red fled from the girl's face, but she said nothing, and giving me the same curious look of mingled triumph and defiance, went back to her old place on the log. There she sat, staring straight into the fire, as if she were wholly oblivious of me and the other men around her.

The partisans were in great glee. They laughed and cracked rough jokes, and presently, as I had expected, pulled out the bottles again and took long, deep draughts, once, twice, thrice. Their faces flushed from the effect of the strong spirits, and the loudness and roughness of their talk increased. Crowder, the leader, was the loudest and roughest of them all.

"That was a fine song you sang to that fellow there when you set him a-napping for us to catch, Miss Howard," he said presently, "and we like music too, don't we, boys?"

"Yes, yes!" they roared, all together.

"And won't you kindly sing that song or another as good for us, Miss Howard?" he continued.

She made no answer, staring straight at the red embers, her cheeks pale.

"I say, Miss Howard, don't you hear?" exclaimed Crowder roughly.

"Yes, I hear," she replied, "but I'm sorry I can't oblige you. I can't sing any more."

"If you can sing for that d—d rebel there," continued Crowder, "I should think you could sing for us, who are good and loyal English like yourself."

She was silent again.

"Didn't we rescue you?" he continued. "Aren't we your saviours? Don't you owe us gratitude?"

Still unanswered, he swore an oath and said to his comrades:

"Here's gratitude for you, lads. Well, if

she won't sing for us, we can sing for her. How do you like this, my lady? It's called I'll owre the Muir to Maggy, and it goes very well with the song you gave us just now."

Then he sang the old song, which like the girl's was Scotch:

"And I'll owre the muir to Maggy—
Her wit and sweetness call me—
There to my fair I'll show my mind,
Whatever may befall me.
If she loves mirth, I'll learn to sing,
Or like the Nine to follow,
I'll lay my lugs in Pindar's spring
And invocate Apollo.

"If she admire a martial mind,
I'll sheath my limbs in armour;
If to the softer dance inclined,
With gayest airs I'll charm her;
If she love grandeur, day and night
I'll plot my nation's glory,
Find favour in my prince's sight,
And shine in future story.

"Beauty can work wonders with ease
Where wit is corresponding,
And bravest men know best to please
With complaisance abounding.
My bonnie Maggy love can turn
Me to what shape she pleases,
If in her breast that flame shall burn
Which in my bosom blazes."

His voice was not unmusical, and he had some idea of rhythm and measure. His comrades joined him, and they roared out a chorus which must have penetrated to the farthest edge of the wood.

"I'll not only sing for you, Miss Howard," said Crowder, "but I'll dance for you too."

It was plain enough that the man was drunk, and was relapsing into his natural condition of savagery. I hoped that he would fall into the fire, but he did not. His drunken head swayed from side to side, but he kept step to the measure of the song.

One of the men drew his empty bottle and beat upon its side with his knife-blade. It made a lively tinkle that sounded like music, and the others, seeing his success, imitated him. Crowder had not only a vocal but an instrumental chorus as well. His zeal increased, and he danced like an Indian at a scalp-dance, while the men roared out the song and beat their bottles with enthusiasm.

"Again I congratulate you on your company, your glorious band of rescuers, Miss Howard," I called out to her.

I knew she heard me, but she did not reply. Her lips were set firmly, although her cheeks were growing paler and paler, and she seemed to be white to the hair. I tugged at my bonds, but I could not move them.

The song stopped for a moment, and Crowder, looking around for further amusement, spied me.

"A good song, boys, and good fun," he cried, "but here's better fun. Let's hang the prisoner and see him squirm."

The others, as drunk as their leader, shouted their approval, but the girl sprang up.

"You shall not do that!" she cried.

"And why not, miss?" asked Crowder. "He is our prisoner."

"Because I will not permit it!" she cried.

They roared with laughter.

"If you do," she said, "I shall report your act to Colonel Tarleton. This man is an important prisoner. He can guide Tarleton to Morgan, and he will do it to save his life. He must be taken safely to the British camp. Tarleton will reward you well."

"All right, if you say so, Miss Howard,"

he said. "Anything to oblige, especially one as handsome as you are. And we won't hang him to-night. Maybe we'll do it in the morning anyhow, but that's no reason why we should stop the fun now. A soldier's life is hard, and he ought to make merry while he can."

He took a large flask from his haversack and shared it with his men. Then they began to sing and dance again, all of them wild with drink.

It was an orgy of savages. The fire died down and ceased to blaze; only the red embers glowed in the darkness. I could feel the blackness of the night as it rolled up and encircled us more closely. The girl was immovable. Her tawny hair shone in the dim light, and I saw that her face was still white, but that was all.

One of the men fell down presently from sheer exhaustion.

"Let him lie," said Crowder. "He'll sleep as well there as anywhere."

The man never moved, but began to snore, and a second one yielded to exertion

and whisky and, stretching out on the ground, went to instant sleep. Crowder himself was the third, and was followed speedily by the others, including the sentinel, who had joined without objection in the orgy. The eight men were sound asleep in a slumber heavy with weariness and liquor.

A last brand fell over in the coals and blazed up. The girl rose from the log, and by its light I saw that her face had turned from white to red. She walked quickly over to me and said in a voice shaking with excitement and alarm:

"Take me away from here, Mr. Marcel! Take me away at once! I would rather be with you than these men, these savages, these brutes! Nor is your life safe here!"

"They wear the British uniform; they must be loyal British soldiers," I could not keep from saying.

"I do not know what they are," she replied with alarmed insistence, "but let's go. Pray take me at once."

She pulled at my shoulders as if she would have me rise and go on the instant.

"Untie my wrists," I said.

She tugged at the cords, but could do nothing. They were tied too tightly.

"Take a knife from that drunken fool's belt," I said, indicating one of the men. "Don't be afraid. He won't wake."

She secured the knife and cut my bonds. I rubbed my wrists together for a few minutes to take out the stiffness and restore the circulation. Again she urged me to start without delay.

"Wait a minute," I said. "We must provide ourselves."

They had taken my arms from me when they bound me, and I recovered them, adding to my supply Crowder's pistol and some ammunition. Then I turned to the horses.

Old Put's great dark eyes flamed with approval and gladness. He had stood at his halter's length, watching the orgy and my rescue with attention and understanding.

"We'll bid farewell to these beasts now, old comrade," I said in a whisper, patting his nose.

He was too cautious to whinny a reply.

The brown hack was near him, but I saw another among those belonging to the guerillas which I fancied much more than him. I hastily changed Miss Howard's saddle to his back, assisted her to mount, and sprang upon Old Put.

I turned the heads of our horses towards the northwest, but as the woods before us were dense and interlaced with wiry bushes and creeping vines, we dared not attempt more than a walk. The horses stamped and neighed as we left them. The girl's mount stepped on a large, dry branch, which broke with a crack like a pistol-shot. Nor did ill luck stop at that. The abandoned horses, frightened by the report, neighed and stamped again, creating a great uproar.

The sentinel, who was the least drunk of the party, sprang to his feet. He was yet half-dazed with sleep and liquor, but he saw the dim figures of a man and a woman riding away from the little encampment, and he knew that, according to the plans of Captain Crowder, it was not what should be. He fired a hasty pistol-shot in our direction, the bullet

clipping the dry twigs above our heads, and then shouted to his comrades to awake, giving emphasis to his cries with many sturdy kicks.

"Look out for your head!" I shouted to Miss Howard. "An untoward bough might prove fatal. And be sure you stay with me."

"I'll not leave you," she said.

"Now, Old Put," I continued, "lead us out of this."

He curved his long neck in the darkness and looked ahead with sharp brown eyes. I let the reins fall loose, and he wound about among the trees with a judgment that was never at fault. The other horse kept close at his side. Behind us we heard the cries of the awakened men as they leaped upon their mounts and rode after us, shouting to us to stop. Two or three more pistol-shots were fired, but the air received them.

If the men saw at all, it was but dimly, though they could follow us by the hoof-beats of our horses and the tearing of the vines and slapping of the bushes as we passed. They made such a prodigious cursing and swearing that we were never in any doubt as to where

they were. I had a mind for a moment to send towards them a pistol-ball which would stop their noise, but I concluded that the greater uproar they made the better it would be for us, as it gave us exact warning of their approach. They did not seem to be gaining upon us, which was a satisfaction for the present. Out on the plain they would see us more distinctly, but I believed that our horses could leave them there.

I saw a beam of light shining through the lattice-work of the boughs, and then another and another, and knew that we should soon be in the open. The girl's horse stumbled, and she uttered a little cry of dismay, but in a moment the animal was steady on his feet again, and we went on. The beams grew more numerous and fused into a broad shield of moonlight. Two minutes more and we should be out of the wood and into the cleared ground, with the fields racing behind us.

But the light had its evil. Against its broad silver disk we were silhouetted like the man in the moon, and the popping of pistols told us we were becoming good targets. One

bullet passed so close to my head that I thought it must have cut a lock of hair in its passage, and I took it as a warning to hurry.

"Haste, Miss Howard!" I said. "We want to be beyond pistol-shot in the cleared ground, for the light will help them there."

She was riding well, and her expression was firm and courageous. We shook the reins against the necks of our horses, and, taking the chances of bush and vine, sped into the open as a volley of pistol-shots whistled after us.

I uttered a shout, half of pleasure, half of defiance, to our pursuers, and bade Old Put show them what it was for a real racer to run his best. I felt confidence too in the horse the girl rode, for he was long-limbed. He looked like a strong animal, and he certainly had a clean, fast gait that kept him alongside of Old Put.

I regarded our escape as assured, and the girl seemed to take a like view of the case. Relief showed in her eyes.

"Miss Howard," I said cheerfully and egotistically, "I congratulate you on the improvement in your company."

"At any rate, you are still a rebel, with a rope around your neck."

"I seem to have been preferred to your British behind us, who do not have ropes around their necks, but deserve them. Remember that I ride with you at your own invitation."

"Then you consider me still your prisoner?"

"Oh, I am yours; but, whether one or the other, I am to be guide."

The men behind us were silent, and we were sure of gaining upon them. I could see their figures rising out of the plain in the misty gray light, gigantic and distorted in shape, and the thud, thud of their horses' hoofs, as regular as the ticking of a clock, came to our ears.

"Which way do we go?" asked the girl.

"To Morgan, of course."

"Then I shall soon be with my father and friends again."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because Tarleton will certainly take

Morgan, and, of course, I shall be recaptured."

She looked at me with much of the old sparkle and defiance and the absolute faith in British valour that British defeats seemed unable to shake. I was annoyed, and my patriotic pride was hurt.

"You take it for granted that Tarleton will win if he should overtake Morgan?"

"I do."

"Yet you have heard the news from King's Mountain?"

"A chance, an accident."

"The same chance, the same accident, may happen again."

"Never."

I could not say her nay, for were we not retreating steadily before the advance of Tarleton, a retreat that seemed to all to be the part of wisdom, for again let it be said that we were fewer in numbers, far inferior in equipment, and more than half of our little army were raw troops, farmers? The exhilaration of the flight and escape disappeared for the time, and a heavy depression took its place.

CHAPTER VI

IN A STATE OF SIEGE

Old Put stretched his neck, and the regular, steady beat of his flying hoofs was music to a man who loves a good horse. But the new horse too lengthened his stride and kept by my side. I judged that he was a good comrade for Old Put. The plain, grassy and undulating, rolled away before us, and I could not see its end.

Our pursuers hung on, and I distrusted their silence. It betokened resolution, a determination to follow us mile after mile, to cling to the chase like hounds after a deer. I judged that among Crowder's motives chagrin at having made such a fool of himself and a desire to repair the error were the strongest. The men did not spread out fan-shape, but followed us in a close group. I was still sure that we were gaining, though very

slowly, and they seemed to think so too, for presently they fired two or three shots, as if they hoped to frighten us with spent balls. The girl's horse swayed a bit to one side, and I thought he had stumbled again, but she said he was merely startled by the pistol-shots, and pulling him back into the true course we galloped on.

We crossed a swell of the earth, and far out on the plain I saw the dim outlines of a small house—that is, a log cabin—rising from the earth. The girl's horse threw up his head and uttered a neigh, or rather a cry or a great sigh, for it was almost like that of a human being, and staggered from side to side, his pace sinking quickly from a sure gallop to a shaky trot. His great eyes were distended with pain and fear, and blood and foam were on his lips. A dark-red clot of blood appeared upon his side, and I knew then that one of the bullets which I thought would fall short had struck him and the wound was mortal.

Without my hand pulling upon his rein Old Put stopped and looked at the other horse with eyes of pity and sorrow, for he knew what

was about to happen—he knew he was going to lose one who had been proving himself a worthy running mate and comrade.

I leaped from Old Put's back and snatched the girl from the saddle just as her horse reeled and fell, giving up his honest life with one great groan.

I half lifted, half pushed her upon Old Put's back, where she sat securely despite the man's saddle. Once she protested, but I roughly bade her be silent and obey me and we should escape yet. Then she said no more.

"See the house yonder?" I said. "We shall reach that and beat them off. Maybe we shall find allies there. This should be a patriot region."

I rested one arm on Old Put's shoulder. The girl was on the horse's back, and I, partly supported by him, ran by his side. It is a trick that the borderers will tell you is common and useful enough. Old Put gave me great assistance, for he understood, and as we flew along, my feet at times seemed not to touch the ground.

Our pursuers reached the crest of the swell

and raised a shout of triumph as they saw the dead horse in the path, and the single horse running on, carrying one of the fugitives and half carrying the other.

I took a quick look backward and calculated that we should reach the hut in time. Our pursuers evidently did not think so, as they fired no more shots. The girl was silent, her hands folded upon the pommel of my saddle and her face all white again. She left the direction of everything to me.

The cabin continued to rise from the plain, the corners, the eaves, and the roof appearing until it stood before us distinct and near at hand.

"Now, Put, old comrade, greatest of horses," I cried, "we are nearing the goal! Show them how much strength and speed you have kept in reserve for this last effort! Show them what you can do when you try your best!"

He replied by deed, and I fairly swung through the air as we raced straight to the cabin. I expected some tousled head to appear, roused by the thunder of so many hoofs,

but none came. The place remained silent and lone. There was a small garden, but no fence around either it or the house.

Old Put dashed straight for the door, as if he knew what was wanted of him—I have no doubt he did—and stopped five feet in front of it so abruptly that the girl would have shot over his head had I not held her.

She sprang to the ground. I slipped the bridle off Old Put, gave him a slap, and cried:

"Go!"

He galloped around the house and disappeared, his hoof-beats dying away in the darkness. Then I pushed open the door and rushed in, dragging the girl after me. I slammed it back and looked for the bar that is commonly used as a fastening in such frontier houses. There it was, and I shoved it into its place. Nothing but a battering-ram could break in that door now!

"Safe for the time!" I cried. "I defy them to take us in this fort!"

Then I looked around me. The girl, half fainting, had staggered against the wall and was leaning there. It was a house of but a

single room. On a wide brick hearth a fire was still burning, or rather smouldering, yet it threw out enough light to disclose the contents of the place. It held no human being save ourselves. Everything of value except the heavy furniture, which was of the rudest description and worth not much more than raw lumber, was removed, and the whole appearance of the room indicated that its occupants had taken a hasty departure. It was easy enough to guess the cause. Some poor family, frightened by the converging of the armies upon this region, and with good reason too—for no other State was harried in this war as was ours of South Carolina—had gathered up their portable goods and fled to safer quarters—perhaps not an hour before our arrival, as was proved by the fire still burning.

"They might have made things a little more comfortable for us," I said cheerfully, for my spirits had gone up with a leap; "but it's good as it is, and we haven't any right to complain. Mr. South Carolina Farmer, whoever you are and wherever you are, we thank you."

The girl smiled faintly and walked mechanically to the fire, where she sat down on a rude stool and spread out her fingers before the coals as if she were in her home.

"Take a little of this," I said, as I saw that she was half dazed. There was yet some whisky in my flask, and I handed it to her. She obeyed me like a child and drank.

Then I turned my attention to the single window, which was closed with a heavy but ill-fitting shutter, a few wandering moonbeams finding a way through the cracks. Peeping out, I could see the guerillas dismounted beyond pistol-shot and holding a conference.

"They are talking, but let 'em talk, my dear," I said to the girl. "They can't get us in this cabin. What a neat, stout little place it is!"

I really began to have a friendly feeling towards her. We had been through dangers together, and, besides, she was my prisoner. It is much easier for the conqueror to be generous to the conquered than for the conquered to be generous to the conqueror.

She did not reply either to my words or my manner. Her cheeks, which had been so white before, were faintly flushed with pink, but I could not tell whether it was the fire or not. She seemed to me to be in a state of collapse, natural to a girl, even the strongest and bravest, in such circumstances.

"Now set the table for us," I said. "We must eat a little after our long, hard ride, as we shall need our strength. See if you can't find a candle in that cupboard. And here, take my bundle and get out the food."

I handed her the wallet of bread and meat snatched from Old Put's back almost with the same motion with which I had swept off his bridle. She took it, drew the rough pine table to the centre of the room, and spread the food upon it. Then, sure enough, she found in the cupboard a piece of old tallow candle, which she lighted and stuck in the middle of the table. These simple household duties seemed to revive her. Her eyes brightened, her colour came back, and her first thought was half to defend, half to apologize, for her previous collapse.

"I was tired merely," she said. "I did not lose courage. Don't think that. I'm an English girl."

"I never said you lost courage," I replied. "I think that you have borne yourself bravely, almost as well as an American girl would have done in the same situation."

"Show me the one who would have done better," she said, with a flash of the eye.

But that was manifestly impossible at the time, and I made no such attempt.

"The table is ready, and we wait only for the army to take a seat and enjoy itself," she said in a light tone.

"Come and have a look at our enemies first," I said, noticing how her strength and courage had come back and how well they became her.

She put her eyes to one of the cracks and looked out. Crowder and his men, unconsciously imitating us, were making themselves comfortable, first by building a great bonfire, and then by sitting around it and keeping warm. They had tethered their horses near, and from their position they could watch the

house very well and detect us if we came forth.

"Why do they follow us so persistently?" the girl asked.

"For a variety of reasons," I replied. "I might mention as one that they are anxious to take me. You know you informed them that I was the bearer of very important news which I would tell, under proper pressure, to Tarleton, and for which they might get a large reward."

"But that was not true."

"They do not know that it was not."

"I wish they were real British soldiers," she said. "I do not believe that any of them ever saw England. I believe they are American Tories, maybe American rebels in British uniforms."

I did not care to argue with her, such is the strength of prejudice founded on teaching and training, especially British prejudice, and most especially the prejudice of British women. Nor did I have any proof that they were not American outlaws.

"Why did you take off his bridle?"

she asked as she turned away from the window.

I had hung Old Put's bridle on a nail in the wall.

"In order that I may have it when I want to put it on him again, which won't be long, I hope," I replied.

"Why, the horse is gone!" she said.

I laughed, laughed in her face, which turned red, and then, seeing that it was red, deliberately laughed again. Here was a woman who prided herself on her intelligence and quickness of mind, and with good cause too, so I had begun to believe, and yet after passing a day and part of a night in Old Put's presence she knew so little about him!

"Why do you laugh?" she asked redly and angrily.

"I laugh at your ignorance," I replied, "the fact that you know so little of our comrade, in many respects the shrewdest and ablest of us three, as he is certainly the swiftest and the strongest. That horse has not left us. I merely took his bridle off in order that he might not be troubled with it, that

he might eat better, for no doubt he will find, somewhere around here, even in winter, a bit of grazing on a sheltered and sunny southern slope. He will take care of himself and come back to us when we need him."

"But suppose the guerillas take him?"

"I wish I was as sure that they would not take us," I said.

Then I led the way to the table. I drew up the stool for the lady and an old pine box that I found in a corner for myself. A little water was left in the canteen. She drank part of it and said:

"Here's to the health of King George!"

"Yes," I said as I drank the remainder of the water, "this is to the health of King George—George Washington! I'm glad to see that your conversion has begun."

She frowned at me, but we had an amicable dinner over the scraps nevertheless. I stopped at intervals to watch the progress of the partisans outside. They had not yet made any movement against us, and all sat or lay around the fire. I counted them—eight—and I knew that all were there, as choice a lot of

scoundrels as one could find on the soil of the thirteen colonies.

I turned my eyes away from the crevice to look at the girl. The rest and the bit of food had made a wonderful improvement. She was a true English rose, I could see that—a rose of Devon or Warwick or Kent, or whatever is fairest among their roses—a girl with yellow hair that shone like fresh gold in the sun, tinted with red in the firelight, and a brow of white, and cheeks of the warm pink that is the heart of the pink rose. Oh, well, as I said twice before, everybody knows that the most beautiful women are the most dangerous, and I wondered if these Saxon maidens of England were ever an exception. For a moment I felt a thrill of warmth and kinship for old England.

"What are you thinking of, Mr. Marcel?" she said suddenly, as she looked up. "Why are you so serious?"

"I am astonished that you should address me as Mr. Marcel and not as a rebel with a rope around his neck."

She patted the floor meditatively with

her foot and looked away from me and at the fire.

"It was a mistake due to forgetfulness," she replied with an air of resentment. "I shall not do it again."

"I would not forget epithets when you speak of us," I said. "You will get out of practice, and then you will be unlike the remainder of your countrymen and countrywomen."

"Do you want another quarrel?" she asked pointedly. "I should think that we had enough to do to carry on our war with those men outside."

She went to the window and took a long look.

"They are still by the fire," she said, "and I see your horse too. He is dining, like the rest of us."

"Where?" I cried, for I was somewhat surprised at the early reappearance of Old Put.

"There's another crack here. Use it," she said. "Don't you see him grazing over there to the left in that field surrounded by a tum-

ble-down fence, or rather the rails of what used to be a fence?"

In truth it was Old Put, about fifty yards to the left of the cavalrymen and grazing with supreme horse content, as if no enemy were within fifty miles of him. It was a southern slope on which he stood, and I suppose some blades of grass retained their freshness and tenderness despite the wintry winds. It was these that Old Put sought, with the assiduous attention to detail and keen eye for grist characteristic of him. There was a fine, full moon, shedding a silver-gray light over the earth. Old Put was clothed in its radiance, and we could see him as distinctly as if he stood at the window—the tapering head; the velvety nose, which slid here and there over the grass in search of the tender stems; the sinewy neck, and the long, powerful body, marked often, it is true, by wear and war, but in the prime and zenith of its strength. My saddle was still upon his back, but that was a trifle to which he had long since grown accustomed in his life with a cavalryman.

How rash of him, I thought, to come so

near the British! The doubt which I had of Old Put when he allowed himself to be deceived by the girl came back to me. Perhaps he was really growing old, falling into his dotage. Surely nothing else could account for his taking such a risk! I would have shouted to him to go away had I thought he could hear me, but I knew my voice could not reach him, and in suspense and anxiety I merely watched that old horse as he continued to graze almost within the light of his enemy's camp-fire.

CHAPTER VII

THE TEMPER OF OLD PUT

My fears found ample justification, for the men soon turned their attention to the horse, and two rose and approached him. I looked upon him as one impounded, and he alone was to blame, for he should have known better. One of the men made a wide circuit and came up carefully behind, while the other approached with equal caution from the front, whistling in a soft and coaxing way and holding out his hand. Evidently they appreciated the value of a good horse, and no doubt they had stolen enough from patriot farmers to have experience. Old Put never raised his head to look at them, but continued his hunt for blades of grass. He certainly heard their approaching footsteps, and I was convinced now that his dotage was really at hand.

"I thought you said he was the most intel-

ligent of us three," said the girl ironically, " and here he is, gone to sleep and letting himself be taken, to be used perhaps as a common cart-horse."

Her words were an insult to us both, Old Put and me, but I knew no timely reply, and I endured them in silence.

The man in front, emboldened by Old Put's gentleness, approached more rapidly and was soon within fifteen feet of the horse. Old Put raised his head, and looking at the intruder a moment lowered it and went on nipping the grass.

The fellow, holding out his hand, stepped forward and seized Old Put by the neck. The horse, with a neigh that was human in its anger, turned and bit deep into his shoulder. A scream, wilder, more fearful than any I have ever heard before or since, rose from the man's throat as the horse reared high in the air and smote him to the earth with his forefeet. The girl turned her eyes away in horror as he was crushed to pulp beneath the fierce beat of the steel-shod hoofs, time for but one cry being given to him, but I kept mine at the crevice,

though I will confess that the blood was rather a chilly torrent in my veins.

The other man, the one behind, faced about and fled when he saw the death of his comrade, and the single look that I had of him showed fright to the marrow. The horse, raising his head, trotted away over the hill. The moonlight fell upon him there in distorted rays and enlarged him into a gigantic figure. In the gray light he looked like some phantom horse, a wild creature that brought death.

The band, recovering from the momentary paralysis caused by the sudden acquaintance of their comrade with death, snatched out their pistols and fired at the horse as they would have fired at a man in his place, but their aim was wild, for Old Put gave no sign of a hit, trotting steadily on, his figure growing larger and more threatening in the exaggerating rays of the moonlight, until he disappeared beyond the swell of the earth. The thing that had been living lay in the dead grass, and I was glad it was almost hidden by some rocks and the roll of the earth.

" He is gone, Julia," I said, " and I don't

think those men will try to take my horse again."

I laughed a little, with a rather forced gaiety, for the influence of the sudden tragedy was still upon me. Yet I was glad that Old Put had redeemed himself so conclusively from the charge of incaution and dotage, which I would never again bring against him, even should they come to be true in the course of the years.

The girl returned to the crevice, and we watched the outlaws for some minutes. After the hasty discharge of the pistols they went back to the fire, making no movement either to pursue Old Put or to remove the body of their fallen comrade. They would have liked well enough to obtain a good horse, but they were not going to bother about such a trifle as a dead man.

"Do you think they will attack us?" asked the girl.

"Well, no; not yet, at least," I replied. "The advantages of the defence are too great, and these men are mere raiders and robbers. They are not going into a dangerous venture

unless the chances are largely on their side. Perhaps they think we shall become frightened and surrender to-morrow."

"You surely will not do that?"

"I had no such intention, worthless rebel as I am, but if you say surrender I will go out and notify them this minute."

"You know I meant nothing of the kind."

She spoke rather sharply, and leaving the window went back to the table, which she began to clear away. She gathered up the scraps and put them back neatly. Then she brushed the crumbs into her hand, for lack of anything else, and threw them in the fire, and having done that pushed the table to one side against the wall. I made no offer to help her, as she did everything with such skill and despatch, and I was content to watch her. Nor did she say anything to me, but, her work done, took her stool again and sat down at the corner of the hearthstone, leaning her head against the wall of the chimney and gazing into the dying fire.

The last log was smouldering on the hearth and threw but a feeble light. I blew

out the candle, thinking we might need it in case our enemies made any hostile movement, and the darkness gathered at once in half the room, only a dim glow showing as a fringe to the fire.

"I think you'd better go to sleep," I said to the girl. "It is always well to save one's strength, and now is a chance for rest."

"And you?"

"I don't want any sleep. I'll stay at the window and watch."

"But you need rest as well as I."

"Why do you bother yourself about a villainous rebel who is going to be hanged anyway by his justly angry king?"

"I wish you would stop talking that way."

Her tone was rather plaintive. Undoubtedly she was tired and worn by anxieties, and I obeyed her request. I made her wrap her cloak around her, and though she declared stoutly that she would not go to sleep, merely wishing to lean her head against the wall and rest, her eyelids drooped and fell, and in two minutes she slumbered.

L. of C.

The fire sank lower, eating its way along the log, until only a few inches of wood were left. The girl slept soundly. The curve of the chimney into the wall formed a kind of nook, and her head and shoulders rested easily there like a picture, framed against the rough logs, which were unplastered and not even smoothly hewn. I trusted that she would sleep the night through, and as the fire sank lower and lower and the darkness crept up to the hearthstone, almost hiding her figure, the stillness of midnight came, and I could hear her regular breathing in the dead silence.

I went back to the window. The fire of the outlaws—for such they were—faced it, and I could see that five of the men had lain down and gone to sleep. The other two were sitting up, weapons at hand, and I inferred they had been detailed as sentinels, though their lazy attitudes showed well enough that it was a job they did not like. For all I could tell at the distance, these too might be asleep, sitting.

I watched them for a half hour or more,

and grew very tired of the business. The brightness of the moonlight culminated, and the earth lost its silver tint, shading into a dark, dull gray. The figures of our besiegers became shadowy and shapeless. It was a time for sleep, and I felt it in all my bones. A trooper doesn't ask much. If I could have taken my blanket and put myself down on a reasonably smooth piece of turf under the shade of a tree, with the certainty that no enemy would waken me, it would have been sufficient. I should have slept the sleep of the just, or the tired unjust, which is often as good.

I drew the box up to the window and sat on it, resolved to listen, now that I was weary of looking. I wondered what had become of Old Put, the manslayer, and tried to discover why I had been such a fool as to distrust him, even for a moment.

Thus musing, I noticed that the fire had gone out; that I could see nothing—in fact, that the room was pitchy dark. I opened my eyes, remembering that all things must be dark to a man with his eyes shut, and saw

again the flickering fire and the figure of the girl half-reclining in the chimney-corner.

This would not do. I was the whole army —horse, foot, artillery, and baggage-wagons, commander-in-chief, colonels, captains, and privates—and we could never go to sleep all at once. I undertook to walk briskly around the room in order to stir my sluggish blood into watchfulness, but that would wake the girl, and I did not want to do such a cruel thing. I stopped in front of her and gazed at her face attentively. Asleep she did not look at all the spitfire she was awake. Mingled with her beauty now was a certain wanness, a something that was pathetic, a look that appealed to a man for protection and strength. After all, she was but a girl, and why should I care for the bitter things she said when probably half the time she said them she was sorry?

I went back to the window and looked out once more. The besieging army was taking its comfort. The part which had stretched itself on the ground remained stretched, and the part which watched sagged more than ever towards the horizontal. It was a lazy army,

that was evident, and I resolved that I would set it an example of superiority.

Having made these brave resolutions, I sat down on the stool and leaned my head once more against the wall, not because I was tired and sleepy, but merely that I might reserve my strength for a crisis, the most necessary thing in the world to a soldier, every man of experience knowing that an army fights better if it goes into battle well fed, well clothed, and well rested. It was a good argument, that bore extension, and I closed my eyes that they too might have rest, as they felt weary and clogged. Then, do what I would or could, weariness and sleep took charge of me. Tired muscles rose in open and defiant rebellion against mind and will.

The combat was short and fierce, but matter triumphed over mind, and in five minutes I was in the midst of a sleep that was heavenly with rest, unpeopled by bad dreams, with my head back against the wall and my breathing long and regular. Meanwhile the bed of coals on the hearth became smaller and paler. The rim of fire narrowed. Coals turned from red

to black and then to gray and crumbled into ashes. The darkness crept up to the very edge of the hearthstone and then invaded it. The girl was completely in the shadows, and the pale glimmer of the fire was but a faint light left in the room.

The sleeping man and the sleeping girl were tired, very tired, and they slept soundly. If they had dreams, they were pleasant ones, and no thought of danger entered into them. Their foes around the camp-fire moved away to the other side of the world, and the little cabin was peaceful for them, inside and outside. Sleeping thus, they did not see the men rise from the camp-fire and approach the hut, now veiled in a darkness that made such a movement safe.

These men reached the cabin without alarm or a sign from the watcher who was not watching, and at last one tried the shutter of the window. He pried at it with his knife and moved it a little. Then he put his ear to the crack and could hear nothing within. Replacing his ear with his eye, he saw the feeble glimmer of the fire and no more. He was sure

that those whom he wished to take were asleep, and he exulted. He pried again at the window, and with greater leverage it yielded further, and wood scraped against wood. He stopped and listened once more, but the inmates of the cabin never stirred.

Putting his ear to the wide crack that now intervened between the shutter and the wall, the outlaw listened again and heard the steady, regular breathing of some one inside and below. He knew it was the breathing of a sleeping man, too loud and strong for a woman, too even for one awake, and he reached up and pulled the shutter wide open on its rude leather hinges. Then he grasped the edge of the window with both hands and raised himself up.

My sleep grew troubled at last and then turned into a nightmare. Some huge wild beast, after the fashion of beasts in nightmares, was sitting on my chest and blowing his breath in my face, while I had no power to move a muscle. I was cold to the marrow and waited for him to devour me, but instead he dwindled away and became misty. With one great ef-

fort I threw him off my chest and leaped to my feet. My head struck against somebody else's head as I sprang up, and that somebody else swore an oath that had the savour neither of a nightmare nor a dream, but of reality.

Cold air and moonlight rushed in at the window, but most of the passage was filled up by the shoulders and head of a large man whose face I could not see owing to the imperfect light. He held in his hand a pistol which he fired at me, but now the imperfect light was to my advantage and not his, for his bullet, avoiding me, buried itself with a chuck in the log walls, and the report confined in the small room roared like a cannon-shot.

Moved more by impulse and instinct than by thought, I snatched out my own pistol and fired at the head in the window. The man uttered a deep sigh; the body dropped forward and swayed there; I heard the light drip, drip of something on the floor, and then the body fell inside the room.

The girl, suddenly awakened by the ter-

rible sounds and half in a maze, cried out in fright and then began to ask in a high, trembling voice what had happened.

"Our foes have attacked us," I said. "One of them was in the shadow, and I threw him back. Stand out of range of the window." I did not want her to see the thing lying on the floor, and I shoved the table in front of it.

She obeyed, for I spoke the last sentence very sharply. The window was wide open, and, expecting to see another face there, I held my second pistol ready; but none appeared, and I had no doubt that they feared their comrade was dead.

Taking the risk, I reached out an arm, seized the shutter, and slammed it shut, securing it as best I could with the leather strap and nail used as a fastening. Then, with my ear near the crevice, I listened, but could not hear our enemies. I feared at first to look out lest I should receive a bullet, but still hearing nothing I applied my eye and saw that the men had gone back to their fire. They were all there—six. I counted them and knew that

none was missing. They were deliberating evidently over the fall of their comrade and what next to do, and I took an immediate resolution.

"Light the candle," I said to the girl. "Hold it to the fire. There's enough heat left to start the wick to burning."

She did so, and saw that something lay behind the table.

"What is that?" she cried.

"A dancer and singer of last night," I replied, seeing that I should have to tell. "One of those desperadoes outside came into our fort, but he came into his grave."

She retreated, shuddering, to the farthest corner of the room.

"Now, you do exactly as I say," I continued. "Remember that you are the rank and file of this army, and I am its commander."

"I will obey you," she said.

I quickly reloaded my pistol.

Then I shoved the table away again and, overcoming my repulsion, dragged the dead body to a sitting position. A chill struck

into my marrow, but I pulled off the red British coat and, having discarded my own, put it on. Then I gathered up the wallet of food and Old Put's bridle and took down the bar from the door.

"Come," I said; "we are going to leave this place while they are planning by the fire and their backs are turned to us."

It was a bold measure, involving many risks, but I believed that it would succeed if we kept our courage and presence of mind. For at least two or three minutes they would think I was their comrade, victorious, and that would be worth much. When I took down the bar, I stopped a moment.

"Keep by my side," I said. "Remember that we must become separated by no chance. Here, take this pistol! You can shoot, can't you?"

She said "Yes," and took the pistol. Then I opened the door and we dashed out, running with quick and noiseless steps across the clearing towards the wood, which rose in a dim line ahead of us.

While the window opened towards the

camp-fire of the besiegers the door did not, and we had gone perhaps fifty yards before they saw us. This I knew by the surprised shout that came to our ears, and looking back I saw them hesitating, as if in doubt about my identity, and at last running towards their horses. I was glad that they would pursue on horseback, and I had taken that probability into consideration when we made a dash from the house, for even at the distance I could see that the dim forest looked dense and a poor place for the use of horses.

"Courage, Julia!" I said, taking her hand. "In a minute or two we shall be into the woods, and that means safety."

I looked back a second time. The guerillas reached their horses, mounted them, and turned their heads our way, but in doing it their time lost was our gain. Unless lamed by some unlucky pistol-shot, we should surely gain the wood. They fired once or twice, and I heard the thunder of their horses' hoofs, but I had little fear. I still held the girl's hand in mine, and she made no effort to draw it away. She was running with a firm, sure step, and,

though her face was white and her eye excited, she seemed to retain both her courage and presence of mind.

The wood was not as far as I had calculated, and when our pursuers were many yards away we dashed into it at such headlong haste that I tripped over a vine and fell upon my nose, burying it in a pile of soft leaves, which saved it from harm. But I was up again, rejoicing at the accident, for in a wood interlaced with vines horses could make no progress.

"I hope you are not hurt?" asked Julia anxiously.

"Hurt? Not a bit of it!" I replied. "What a blessing these woods are! How dark it is in here, and what a blessing that is too!"

In fact, the wood was our good luck and our best luck at that, for even we on foot found it difficult to make our way through it. Afar we could hear our pursuers cursing in profusion and variety as they strove to force their horses through the dense bush.

"Hold my hand," I said to Julia, "as

otherwise I might lose you in all this darkness and density."

But instead of waiting for her to take my hand, which she might not have done, I took hers, and, bidding her again to step lightly, I led the way, curving among the trees and bushes like a brook winding around the hills in search of a level channel. My object was to leave our pursuers at a loss concerning our course, and we soon ceased to hear their swearing or the struggles of their horses. I dropped into a walk, and, of course, the girl did likewise.

"I think we are safe now," I said. "There is not one chance in a hundred to bring them across our path again. What a fine wood! What a glorious wood! There is no such wood as this in England. It grew here especially for our safety, Julia."

"It did grow up in time," she replied, "but now that you think us safe again you can call me Miss Howard, and not Julia."

"That's true, and now that we are safe again I must ask you, Miss Howard, as an

especial favour to me, to please quit holding my hand."

"I am not holding your hand, Mr. Marcel!" she replied indignantly. "It is you who are holding mine, but you shall not do so a moment longer."

She tried to jerk her hand away. I let her jerk three or four times, and then I added as an afterthought:

"It is very dark here, and there is still danger that we might become separated. I think I will let you hold it a little longer, but I shall endure it merely because it is a military necessity."

She gave her hand a most violent jerk, and it nearly slipped from me, but I renewed my grip in time.

"Simply a military necessity," I repeated, and, seeing that it was useless, she made no further effort to withdraw the hand. I could not see her face, the darkness being too great, and therefore had little opportunity to judge of her state of mind.

We walked on in silence, winding here and there through the wood, with an occasional

stop to listen, though we heard nothing but the common noises of a forest—the crackling rustle of dry leaves and twigs, the gentle swaying of some old tree as the wind rocked it, and the soft swish of the bushes as they swung back into place after we had passed between.

CHAPTER VIII

JULIA'S REVENGE

We walked for nearly an hour, and during the last three-quarters of it kept straight to the northwest, in which direction I thought Morgan, with his little army, lay, or rather marched. At last the bush became thinner and the trees stood farther apart. I inferred that we were approaching the end of the forest, and I was not sorry, as the travelling was hard, and I believed that we had lost our pursuers. Presently we came into the open, and I let the girl's hand drop.

"Which way are we going now?" she asked.

"Wait a moment," I said.

I put two fingers to my lips and blew between them a whistle, soft, long, and penetrating.

"Why do you do that?" asked the girl in a

fright, coming towards me. "You will bring them upon us again."

"Wait," I repeated, and I blew the whistle a second time. We stood motionless for two minutes, and then I heard a faint crush, crush, as of approaching footsteps.

"They are coming!" cried the girl, seizing my arm. "Let us run into the wood again."

"Wait," I said for the third time.

The footsteps approached rapidly, and a figure, gigantic and formidable in the gray light, appeared through the trees. The girl cried aloud in a panic of terror and gripped my arm.

"Don't be alarmed, Julia dear," I said. "See who it is!"

Old Put walked up to me, gave his glad, familiar whinny, and rubbed his nose on my disengaged arm. Then he started back, and his eyes flamed with wrath.

"Don't be angry, old comrade," I said. "It is true I wear a red coat, but it is only a disguise, a ruse, and I shall get rid of it as soon as I can."

He wagged his head as a sign that my

apology was sufficient, and made no further protest. I slipped the bridle on him, and the girl broke into a nervous laugh of relief.

"Did you think Old Put would desert a comrade?" I asked.

"Wait here just a moment," I continued. I led Old Put a little distance and, gathering up some dry leaves, wiped the stains off his hoofs. Then I returned with him and told her to jump upon his back, but the horse shied away from her, showing aversion and anger.

"Never mind, Old Put," I said. "It is all right. She won't beat you again. She likes us both."

"It seems to me that you are rather inclusive in your statements," she said.

"Get up," I ordered, and, giving her a hand, I assisted her to jump upon the back of Old Put, who received my explanation with perfect confidence and assumed a protecting air towards her.

"And now once more for Morgan," I said.

"Which, of course, means Tarleton in the end," she said. "And I want to say, Mr.

Marcel, that when the rebel army is taken I shall not forget the service you have done me at a great risk to yourself. My father has influence with Colonel Tarleton, and I shall ask him to secure your good treatment while in captivity."

She spoke with quite an English—that is to say, quite a patronizing—air.

"You are very kind," I replied, "but Morgan has not been caught yet, has he, Old Put?"

Women think it their right to abuse a man and receive nothing but chivalry in return.

The old horse shook his head defiantly, and I felt encouraged. We had entered a good country for travelling and at last came into something that was meant evidently for a road, but it very much more resembled a gully washed out by the rains. It led in the right direction, and I followed it, despite my persuasion that we were now in territory practically occupied by the British, and were much more likely to meet them in the road than in the fields or forest. But I was tired of such

difficult travelling, and, being extremely anxious to rejoin Morgan, I chose the course which promised the best speed.

Old Put carried the girl, and I walked on before, holding his bridle in my hand. I sank into a kind of walking doze—that is, I slept on my feet and with my feet moving. I was just conscious, but I knew that I could put my trust in Old Put and that he would warn me if she made any attempt to escape. Whether the girl was asleep or wide awake I knew not, for my brain was too tired and dull then to tell me, but, looking back once, she seemed to be awake. She had slept well in the hut, while only a short nap had fallen to me.

We were in the darkest hours, those that stretch out their length between midnight and dawn, and I walked on over a dim and shadowy world. Sometimes I was not conscious that my feet touched anything but air. This queer feeling that I was walking on nothing lasted for nearly an hour, and then my half-sleep took another phase. I came back to earth, and the red clay of the road took on for a while the colour of blood. The trees by the

roadside raced past, rows of phantoms, holding out withered arms and making gestures that I did not understand. Once the dead face of the man in the hut rose up out of the road and confronted me, but when I said, "You were a murderer and worse, and compelled me to kill you," and walked boldly at him he melted away like so much smoke, and I laughed aloud at such a poor kind of ghost that would run at the first fire.

"What on earth are you laughing at?" demanded the girl from the horse's back.

I awoke with a jerk and replied:

"At your gratitude."

But I was on the verge of sleep again in five minutes, and the trees and the hills and the bushes were playing new tricks with me. The bushes were especially impudent, nodding to me and then to each other and then saying aloud:

"Here he goes! Look at him—making a fool of himself and wasting his time over an English girl who hates him and all his countrymen!"

I picked up a stone, threw it at one exces-

sively impudent bush, and shouted at the top of my voice:

"It's a lie!"

"For Heaven's sake, Mr. Marcel," cried the girl, "what's the matter? Have you a fever?"

"I was dreaming," I said confusedly, and I made no further explanation, for she asked no more, merely saying she hoped it was not worse than that.

The trees and bushes did not cease to nod at me and waggle their heads at each other and make jeering remarks about me, but I paid no further attention to them, treating them with the lofty scorn of silence, which is supposed to be the most effective of all replies. The road led into hilly country, but I tramped on in my dream, becoming dimly conscious that it was growing light. Afar off there in the east, just where the sky touched the earth, was a bar of light. As I looked it broadened and began to roll up like a great wave of molten silver. On the horizon the hills and trees rose out of the darkness.

Old Put turned his face to the daylight

and whinnied approval. An answering whinny came as twenty cavalrymen galloped around a hill, opening in two lines and closing up again, with us in the centre.

"Wake up! Wake up, man! Why, you'll walk into a river or over a cliff if you sleep on in this way," said one of the cavalrymen, leaning over and slapping me vigorously on the shoulder.

I awoke and looked up at his bewhiskered English face and his bestriped English coat, and was filled with confusion and dismay.

"Why, he isn't awake even yet!" said the officer, with a laugh. "Are you from Cornwallis?"

His tone, though eager, was friendly, and the reason for his question flashed upon me. It was the red coat that I wore, the desperado's coat, which had served me one good turn already.

"Yes," I said, "my name's Hinkle, and I'm from Cornwallis with an important message for Tarleton. I was pursued last night by a gang of rebels, who shot my horse, but I escaped them in the wood. An hour ago I

overtook Miss Howard here, who also has an important despatch for Tarleton, and I am trying to pilot her and myself at the same time to him."

The officer raised his hat to Miss Howard and regarded her with open admiration.

"Your bravery and loyalty equal your beauty, Miss Howard," he said. "England can never suffer when we have such as you. Don't you remember me? I'm Lieutenant George Cuthbert, and I had the honour of an introduction to you at Lord Cornwallis's ball in Charleston some months ago."

"Indeed I do," she replied in a tone of recognition, "and I hope that we shall meet again soon under such peaceful circumstances, but now I must hasten on, for my message will not wait, and so must this kind soldier, who has been such an assistance and protection to me. Can you direct us by the best road to Tarleton?"

"Keep straight in the way you are going," replied the officer, "and if you hurry you ought to overtake Tarleton before noon. Have no fear of the rebels. Tarleton is driv-

ing them all ahead of him, except one small party to the south of here, for which we are looking. I'd give you an escort into Tarleton's camp, but I need all my troopers for the task I have in hand, and my orders are strict."

"I thank you for your courtesy and information, Lieutenant Cuthbert," she replied, "and I hope that we shall meet again soon in Charleston when all these rebels are taken."

"And that will not be long, Miss Howard," he said with a gallant bow.

He gave the word to his troopers, and they galloped on.

During this ordeal the behaviour of Old Put was something wonderful to see. Though he hated a redcoat as a cat hates a snake, he seemed to understand that he had a part to act and that he must act it well. All his true character disappeared. He was a shambling, drooping horse, with his head down and ready to submit to anything; just an ordinary, oppressed British horse of the lower classes, not a proud-spirited American horse, conscious of the Declaration of Independence and the truth

that all men and horses are born free and equal.

But when the last of the British troops disappeared around the hill and their gallop sank into a mere echo, Old Put resumed his former and true character—his figure expanded, he held up his head once more. He was the true patriot, equal to all. I was glad to see the change, for that was the character in which I liked him best.

We went on for a long time in silence, barring a request from the girl that I ride and let her walk in my place. I declined abruptly, saying I was a cavalryman, with such few opportunities for walking that I intended to enjoy one when I had it.

The sun, following the new light in the east, appeared above the hills. The far crests and forests flamed with red gold, and we trod silently on in the shining light of the morning.

"Why did you not take your opportunity," I asked at length, "and return to your own people? Why did you not tell them back there who and what I was?"

She remained silent, and I looked back at her.

"Julia," I said, and she did not seem to notice that I called her by her first name again despite her command, "why did you not tell them who I was and let them take me a prisoner?"

"I have called you a rebel with a noose around your neck, and it is true. The noose is always there, and it was pressing very close at that moment. For you to have been taken a prisoner then meant your death. I could have seized the chance of returning to my own people then only by hanging you."

"How? I do not understand you."

"Look at the red coat you wear. 'A spy!' says Tarleton, who knows no mercy. 'Hang him at once!' and you are hanged."

I had forgotten the coat, which, having served me well twice, might serve me very ill the third time.

"I must get rid of this coat soon," I said. Then I added as an afterthought: "But what is it to you were I hanged? It would be only

one more wicked rebel meeting the fate that he deserves. Why should you put yourself to trouble for me?"

I looked back over my shoulder, though I may not have had the appearance of looking. I saw a flush as of the morning that was around us overspread her face, and she gazed afar over my head, her eyes shining with something I had not seen there before. I asked her no more, but the morning continued to grow into a splendour and radiance passing all previous knowledge of mine.

The sun crept up, and the light reached all the earth, west as well as east. We were still in the red-clay road, winding among lone hills and deserted fields and patches of primitive forests. We came to a brook of cool, clear water, babbling over the stones.

"Here we rest," I said, "and eat breakfast. Jump down, Julia."

She sprang down, and all three drank at the brook—Julia, Old Put, and I. Then we ate the remains of our provisions, while the horse found some tender stems of grass by the brookside.

"I think we had better leave the road now," I said, "for this is the enemy's country, and I do not want to meet any more of Tarleton's men."

It was my purpose to make a circuit around Tarleton and join Morgan, and she made no objection, but suggested that she walk with me.

"I am tired of riding," she said, "and it will be good for the horse too."

I threw the bridle-reins over Old Put's head, told him to follow us, and we started on our great curve around Tarleton. Being a Charleston man, I knew very little of that part of the country, but in my campaigning with Greene and Morgan I had obtained some idea of the lay of the land, and I was sure of the general course I ought to follow. Besides, I felt very good, and I was full of enthusiasm. But little of the country had been cultivated, and as the forest was not dense there was nothing to stay our progress. We marched steadily on, and what impressed us most was the desolation of the land. But thinly peopled in the first place, everybody here, as in

the country through which we travelled the day previous, had fled before the advance of the armies. We passed two abandoned cabins in the scanty fields, but saw no other sign of human habitation. Yet it did not sadden me. The sunshine was beautiful, and the old world was fresh and young.

"In a few years, Julia," I said, "when the last of Tarleton's raiders is sent across the sea or to his final home, and we win our freedom, all this will be peaceful and populated."

She said nothing—nothing about the valour of the English and the speedy destruction of the rebels—but looked abroad over the country with kindling eyes. It was fair to see, even in winter, with its rolling hills and sloping valleys and streams of sparkling water, a fit place for the growth of a noble race of freemen. But just then it was the most unhappy part of all our continent. Neither man nor woman could expect mercy where Tarleton's raiders came, and all the books will tell you—and tell you rightly—that the war was more ferocious in the South than in the North, and

most ferocious of all on the soil of South Carolina. Where partisan bands ravage and fight, and the people of the soil themselves are set and embittered against each other, then war is seen at its worst.

CHAPTER IX

TWO AND A HORSE

We travelled all the day, the crisp air blowing in our faces and the winter sunshine falling on our heads. My good spirits did not depart, and I could see no signs of gloom on the girl's countenance. Clearly she was bearing up well, and I took it to be an evidence of fine sense. Resignation is a great thing, though it is often difficult to have it.

We passed two or three cabins, but as before they were abandoned, the inhabitants fleeing to the mountains for shelter from the fierce partisan bands that ravaged in the name of either side. I felt a sudden access of pity when we stopped about the noon hour before one of these lonely little houses and ate our scanty dinner. I had noticed a child's rude toy—probably made by the father's own hand—lying in the grass before the doorstep, no doubt dropped in their hasty flight, and the

sight moved me more than anything else that met my eye. Miss Howard did not see it, and I did not intend to point it out to her. But she heard me.

"Why do you sigh?" she asked.

"I was lamenting the war," I replied.

"You began it," she said quickly.

"I don't know about that," I replied, "and besides there was the matter of the tea."

"What's a few pounds of tea?"

"It wasn't the tea so much as the stamp on it."

"How much was your share of the stamp?"

"I didn't know that you wished to teach me mathematics," I said. "We're talking of different things; you've got pennies in mind, but I've got principles."

I sighed again, this time with satisfaction, and expected to see her crushed. But she looked scornful.

"That's the last refuge of a man," she said. "A woman speaks from her feelings and acts accordingly; a man talks glibly of his principles and does something else."

"What principle have I violated?"

"You were born a subject of King George, and here you are fighting against him."

"But that stamp on the can of tea?"

"We pay bigger stamps in England, and because you provincials have a little one you choose to fight."

"Now you have struck the best reason why we fight."

"What is it?" she asked, and she looked at me wonderingly.

"You call us provincials, and we shall have to beat you to show you that we are not."

She was silent and thoughtful for a moment or two. Then she said:

"I believe you are partly right. Still, Mr. Marcel, I can't afford to condone your great faults on that account."

"I don't see why you choose to use me as a personal illustration," I said.

I felt injured.

"There is nothing else convenient, and it is the best use to which I can put you. Per-

haps I was wrong when I didn't betray you to that British officer back there."

I did not say anything, but I saw a wicked little flash in the corner of her left eye, and I was reassured. Then I put old Put's bridle over his head and we went on again, our progress continuing through the afternoon without halt or hindrance. Sometimes the girl rode and at other times she walked beside me, while Old Put looked upon us benignly. But I noticed that she was more quiet than in the morning, having much less to say. She seemed, too, to be thoughtful, as if a weight lay upon her mind. This I did not think to be fitting in a captive of mine, more or less upon terms of friendship with her captor, so I spoke to her about it.

"Why are you so silent, Miss Howard?" I asked.

"I was thinking," she replied.

"Of what?"

"Of my duty. But you cannot understand. That, I suppose, is a subject which never troubles a rebel like you."

Again I felt injured.

"Miss Howard," I asked, "why do you always insist that we rebels are without consciences?"

"Because if you had them you would not be rebels."

"But we didn't have a good king."

"Oh, well, there are worse. Besides, your king was just as good as our king."

Which was true. Yet I wondered why she returned to the subject so often, when for some time previous she had never referred to it at all. I fell to studying her as she walked beside me. I am no mean judge of beauty—it is part of my South Carolina birthright—and I liked this tall English girl, so strong and vigorous. I liked her yellow hair, every thread of which seemed to be the melted strand of a King George guinea, and I liked her blue eyes and fair skin. When fair women are beautiful they are truly beautiful.

Again I say that I know beauty when I see it, and now that I had an opportunity to observe her well I did not have to be told that she was one for whom men would go far. I was glad, too, that my girl captive, since I

was compelled to take one, was handsome. I did not want to be marching across South Carolina with an ugly woman. I looked at her again. Truly she was most fair—but that too had its dangers.

On we went. Still the same lonely country. Still the same rolling hills, and leaping brooks of clear water, still the same dead foliage of winter, gilded a golden brown by the sunshine, poured now in a flood upon the earth. We passed one or two clearings, but they were mere islands in the wilderness. All else looked as primitive and savage as if Puritan and cavalier had never landed.

The afternoon waned, brown shadows gathered in the east, the red sun glowed in the west, and the night chill fell. The girl looked inquiringly at me.

"Where shall we camp?" she asked.

"I do not know," I replied.

"But you ought to know," she said, "you are the commander of this expedition and I am a mere prisoner. Now if the conditions were reversed and we were in my country, and I the captor, I should not hesitate."

"Oh, no, you would not hesitate if you were in England, where there is a house every forty rods; you would merely take a step or two, knock at the door of an inn, turn me over to the horse-boys, and there's an end to your troubles. That's the reason you English never understand us. You don't take into account the difference in circumstances."

"But we are learning. Besides, we understand you better than anybody else does. We are your kinsmen and kinswomen, and you can't help it. You may hate us more than you do others, but at the same time you like us more. Oh, you'll come around."

She looked at me with such a patronizing air of confidence that I was quite taken aback. But this discussion was not bringing us any nearer to a night's lodging, and I said so.

"Find a place," she replied. "I need it, and I am waiting."

Since she assumed that air with me I decided to fall back upon my authority as a captor.

"I am not sure that we shall stop," I said

in an indifferent tone. "I may conclude to travel all night. You know that I am most anxious to overtake Morgan."

"But I can't go on!" she cried. "I am worn out!"

I whistled a little, but still maintained an indifferent air.

"That's too bad," I said, "but, after all, I don't think you can do us any harm now. You are so far away that you could never find Tarleton. As for me, I'm in a hurry; I must overtake Morgan, and since you are worn out I suppose that I shall have to leave you here. Come, Old Put, we'll go."

Old Put arched his neck, gave the girl a regretful look as if he would say a sad farewell, and led the way.

She looked towards the forest in the West, where the tops of the trees were reddened by the last rays of the setting sun, and then she looked towards the East, where tree tops and all were lost in the enveloping darkness. I saw her face blanch.

"Oh, Mr. Marcel!" she cried. "Would you leave me alone in this awful wilderness?

I'll starve to death, if the wild animals don't eat me up first!"

"I did not open the subject," I replied. "It was you who said that you could not go on. My business, you know, can't wait."

"I'll walk all night if only you won't leave me!" she cried. "I'm not tired. I was but jesting when I said so. See how vigorous and fresh I am!"

She strode rapidly after Old Put and me, and in truth she made a fine pretence of vigour, but I could see that the effort was painful and I was sorry for her. So we stopped and she stopped too. Then she looked around at the chilly wilderness, and shivered both with cold and fear. I saw her tremulous lip, and I was sorrier than ever for her. Old Put emitted a soft neigh which said as plain as day: "You are too harsh with her, my master."

"I'll promise to behave, if only you won't leave me!" she cried.

"And you won't call me a rebel any more?"

She hesitated.

"And you won't call me a rebel any more?" I repeated firmly.

"I promise," she replied at last.

"See that you keep your promise," I said with some sternness. Still, she seemed to me a pathetic figure standing there, and we were comrades, too. We had passed through great dangers together, and she had spared me and remained my prisoner, when she might have given me to an ignominious death, at the same time releasing herself. I could not forget these things, and I was a little bit sorry that I had frightened her so.

"We shall hunt an inn at once, Miss Howard," I said. "I've no doubt that we can find a most glorious one with a horde of servants eager to wait on us."

She laughed and her face glowed again. Clearly her mind was relieved. Then Old Put and I turned back to join her, and that brave horse, raising his head, neighed loudly, a neigh of satisfaction.

I knew that I had Old Put's approval, and it added to my content.

"Which way do we go?" asked the girl.

"I think it will not be much farther," I replied.

I had been through this immediate region twice before, and I knew its nature—an expanse of low hills, often with steep sides, and great hollows in the decaying rock that formed their base. In such a place as this I would make a shelter for Miss Howard. Meanwhile the last shreds of day were eaten up by the coming night. The sinking sun glowed for a moment in the west, and then the black veil hid it, darkness clothed the forest, and the wintry wind moaned among the dead leaves. The girl drew nearer to me, and Old Put rubbed his nose on my arm.

"Here we are at last, Miss Howard," I cried. "Behold our inn waiting for us! Look how the fire shines through the windows and see how the nimble servants run to take our baggage. Ho, coachman, let us down here! This is our stopping-place."

"I see it all," she said. "And how good the waiting dinner smells—a tender chop of English mutton, white bread, and a little

claret! We shall enjoy it, shall we not, Mr. Marcel?"

It was a great hollow—almost a cavern—in the rocky side of a hill, with its stony floor and its natural arch of stone overhead. All around the dead leaves of the forest lay in a carpet, inches thick. A man accustomed to rough life could easily find here wilderness shelter for a woman.

I made a hollow tube of my hands, and, putting them to my mouth, blew the coachman's horn.

"Will you alight, Miss Howard?" I said with exaggerated politeness, "and partake with me of the noble cheer that is awaiting us?"

"I thank you for your exceeding courtesy, My Lord Marcel, of Rags and Patches, and I think I shall," she replied.

I looked ruefully at my attire. The only sound garment about it was the English coat that I had taken.

"But it's the best I have," I said.

"It is gorgeous raiment for a reb——"

"Beware," I cried, raising my finger.

"I was about to forget," she said, putting her finger on her lips.

I gathered fallen brushwood and built a heap in front of the hollow, to which I set fire with my punk and steel, making a gallant blaze; then I drew forth the small remains of our food and we ate. I was in a joyous mood. I do not know why it was, but despite the darkness I seemed to be dwelling in a sort of rose-coloured atmosphere. I suppose it was the escape from our great dangers. Old Put sympathized with me, as he whinnied gently several times. The girl was obedient and subdued.

I was tired with the long day's travel and the loss of sleep the night before, and I chose to relax, leaning back luxuriously against a fallen log, and taking off my belt with its holsters and pistols, which I placed on the log beside me. Then I watched the fire glow and increase and the red coals fall, and the feeling of content and glorious ease grew stronger. The girl too was silent, her lips slightly parted—how red they were!—and the vivid light of the flames falling over her hair

until it blazed in alternate streaks of scarlet and gold.

I rose presently and gathered great armfuls of the dry leaves, which I spread on the stone floor of the hollow. The girl looked at me inquiringly, but I did not answer until the floor was covered. Then I said:

"For your bed."

"You are very kind," she said, "for a re——"

"Beware!"

She smiled, and then I thought that she looked a trifle sad.

"Mr. Marcel," she said, "I wish you were one of ours."

"I'd do almost anything to oblige you, Miss Howard," I replied, "but I couldn't do that."

"Oh, I haven't asked you; the British army is very select, you know," she said, and I saw that wicked little glint appear again away down in the corner of her left eye.

"I suppose that I haven't enough pedigree," I said; "but I've never wanted the chance. I could have chosen either side at

the beginning of this war, and my judgment still confirms my choice."

She was silent, and I went a little distance for more firewood. When I came back with my arm full of billets I found myself walking into the muzzle of one of my pistols, held in the firm hand of that English girl. The other, with the belt and holsters, lay across her lap.

"Conditions have changed, Mr. Marcel," she said.

"So I observe."

"I am about to put down an insurrection."

"Not at all; you have just begun one."

Old Put, who was seeking winter herbage near by, looked up, and I saw his great black eyes wondering. "Ah, my faithful horse, you have a right to wonder at such black ingratitude," thought I.

"What do you mean, Miss Howard?" I asked.

"I think that I have been the captured long enough; now I wish to be the captor."

"Very well," I said, "you have your wish;

but at least let me put this wood on the fire. The night is cold, and we shall need it."

"Oh, I have no objection," she replied. "You are certainly right about the fire."

She shivered a little as the wind moaned about the hollow.

I placed the billets carefully on the coals, meanwhile watching her out of the tail of my eye, and I saw her finger moving nervously on the trigger. I became scared. That had always been a large pistol, but its muzzle suddenly expanded to a diameter of six inches, and I could see in its throat a ball large enough for a twenty-four-pounder.

"For Heaven's sake, Miss Howard," I cried, "don't be careless! That's a hair-trigger! If you should accidentally press it you'd blow me clear over the North Carolina line."

She deflected the muzzle a little.

"There, is that better?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," I answered, "much better." And I took a long, deep breath. I also wiped a small drop of perspiration from the centre of my forehead.

Then I sat down on the far end of the log.

"Now, Miss Howard," I said, "will you kindly tell me just what you have in mind?"

"I shall take you a prisoner back to Tarleton, and I shall compel you to lead the way. You see that I have the pistol."

"That is to say, you have the pistol hand over me."

"You put it well, Mr. Marcel."

"When shall we start? Have you decided upon that point?"

"Oh, yes, time presses. For Tarleton's sake we cannot afford to stay here to-night. We must start now. Catch the horse at once, Mr. Marcel. For the present I will rule and you shall go on before."

"Suppose I refuse to obey your orders?"

"Then I shall have to shoot you. Don't make me do it."

"I refuse absolutely to move a step," I said, and with a look of grim determination I folded my arms on my breast—I saw that the muzzle of the pistol pointed directly at a tree about six feet on my right.

"Mr. Marcel, why are you so obstinate? Obey orders."

"My military honour forbids it. I cannot go to Tarleton. My country says to me, 'If you must die to serve me, then die.'"

She looked distressed.

"Mr. Marcel," she said, "I don't want to shoot you. Please obey me."

"I prefer death to obedience."

The finger that lay on the trigger was trembling, and suddenly by a sort of nervous constriction it pressed it. There was a flash, a bang, and I heard a slug of lead imbed itself in the tree. She threw down the pistol with a cry of fright and ran towards me.

"O Mr. Marcel," she cried, "have I hurt you? I didn't mean to shoot you! I really didn't! It was an accident! I didn't know that my finger was pressing the trigger so hard!"

When she saw me still sitting on the log bolt upright and unharmed she stopped suddenly, and her face flamed into scarlet. Then she put her hands over her face, sat down on the log, and cried a little. I thought it best to say nothing at that moment, but I picked up the pistols and the belt, and after care-

fully reloading the discharged weapon, Old Put all the while looking on, as if he didn't understand—which doubtless he didn't—put them back where they belonged. Then I said:

"I am glad you didn't kill me."

"So am I," she said.

CHAPTER X

SWORDS IN THE TWILIGHT

THE night settled down darker and colder than ever. I did not know what partisan bands might be roaming through this desolate region, and another such misadventure as that with Crowder and his men was possible, but I did not let the fire die. It could send forth signals to enemies, but I felt that we must take the risk lest Miss Howard be chilled and prostrated. So I heaped the fallen wood higher and higher, and the flames roared and crackled, sending forth cheerful sparks.

Old Put shivered, ceased his hunt for the withered grass, and drew near the coals. He gave Miss Howard an injured look, as if he did not understand her recent action, but when she rubbed his nose with a white hand his suspicious air gave way to one of complete content. The instinct of a good horse

is more than human. Yet I felt that I should give utterance to speech.

"Beware, Put, of the hand that sought to slay your master," I said. "Oh, it was a big bullet! I ought to know. I put it in that pistol myself, and then to think that it was fired at me! I heard it whiz past my ear. It was poor aim, Put, or you would have no friend now."

The horse paid no attention at all to me, but went on rubbing his nose against Miss Howard's hand. The traces of tears were gone from the girl's face, and I saw that wicked little flash appear once more away down in the corner of her left eye. It seemed to be a characteristic of hers.

"Do you wish to leave a cruel master, Put," she said, "and come with me—a master who rides you hard and imagines strange things about other people who happen to be with him?"

The horse gave me a reproachful look, and I felt his rebuke. So I went for more fire-wood. Then I told Miss Howard that it was best for her to sleep while I watched. She

protested, saying that she too could sit by the fire through the night, but I, of course, would not listen to her. At last she wrapped herself in her heavy cloak and went to sleep among the dry leaves in the hollow. She was well sheltered there, and I knew that she would not suffer.

I walked back and forth a while, but my eyelids were so heavy that I could scarce keep them open. I had been under a long and hard strain and Nature was having her say. She was telling me that I must rest, and, above all, sleep. So I lay down close to the fire, still saying to myself that I would keep my eyes open. The heat felt grateful, a pleasing warmth stole through me, and my muscles relaxed; the forest and the fire swam in a mist, and I rode luxuriously in a coach and four to slumberland. Then I dreamed a dream of a beautiful woman who bent over me and said some low words that I could not understand.

When I awoke Old Put was nuzzling at my shoulder, the fire had burned low, and the hollow was empty. I sprang to my feet with

a cry followed by a great sense of abandonment and loneliness. Then Old Put and I gazed sorrowfully at each other. So she had left us—perhaps in a moment of desperate resolve—while we trusted her and slept!

"I was right at the first, Put, when I told you to put no faith in woman," I said.

I reflected that when man falls into woman's snares he falls open-eyed—that is, he was open-eyed in the beginning—which makes him a still bigger fool.

I thought a little. My news should go at once to Morgan, but I could not forget my comrade of such dangers. She could never find her way back to Tarleton on foot and without a guide. Then she might meet another such band as Crowder's—perhaps that very band. I shuddered. Duty and something else were having a great struggle in my mind. But I took my resolve.

"Put," I said to my horse, "duty is great and must not be denied, but it can be made to wait."

Then we turned back and began to seek Miss Howard. I was sure that she would at-

tempt to retrace our path of the day before. What other road could she, a lone girl, take? I wondered that she had the courage to make such an attempt, but I supposed that the feeling of loyalty to her king, so strong in her, drove her on. Truly, loyalty can be made into a very wide cloak.

I did not believe that she had been gone long. She would not have dared to leave before the first touch of dawn, and the day was not yet old. The west was still gray though the east was blazing with the sunrise, and as we went, the rest of the world swam up from its night bath into the full glow of light. The trees and bushes gleamed in the white frost, and the crisp air entered my blood like a stimulant.

"We shall find her, Put; we shall find her," I said, "and she shall go with us to Morgan."

He neighed approvingly, and, springing upon his back, I rode in a canter, retracing our path of the day before. I soon reached the crest of a rather high hill, and sitting there on Old Put, I scrutinized the horizon on all

sides. But I saw nowhere the sign of a human being, and my hopes fell a little. Then I had another little struggle with duty, but I quickly ended it in the same way as before. She too bore news, but hers was for Tarleton, and it was my part to see that she did not deliver it. So I continued in my chosen course.

I had an abiding faith that she would keep in the road, or rather path, lest she lose herself in the wilderness. She was used to the park-like country of England, where all is plain for the traveller, and here our wild hills and great forest would terrify her.

I hastened my pace. My fear was still of Crowder or others like him. If only I could find her first! The thought made me urge Old Put into a gallop. He was nothing loath. It may be that in his horse heart he felt the same fear.

We reached the crest of another hill, and there was the same view, desolation and loneliness, only the frosty white world was now turning yellow in the sunlight. Hills and forests seemed to swim in a golden haze. I gave the rein to Old Put again and we gal-

loped on, going mile after mile and still finding ourselves alone.

I examined the way as I went, and once I thought I saw the traces of light footsteps, but I was not sure. Higher rose the sun, and the earth was still wrapped in a golden veil, but I had no time for its beauty. My fears grew. Perhaps the girl wandered into the forest and was lost, or perhaps she had been taken already by one of the wild and lawless bands.

When I had travelled several hours I concluded that it was useless to continue in that way. The girl on foot could not be ahead of me. Doubtless she had turned aside in the woods to let me pass. So I rode back, and presently I made a discovery which increased all my fears. A number of horsemen had ridden from the woods, and, turning into the path, were now going my way. There were the footprints as plain as day, and as the number seemed to be about the same as those of Crowder's band I dreaded lest in truth it was this reckless outlaw and his wild followers.

I rode more slowly now. It was not well

to walk blindfolded into a trap—not well for the sake of Miss Howard, Morgan, and myself. Old Put uttered a low neigh as if he too suspected trouble, and then we advanced in silence. The hoof-prints after a while turned aside and entered the forest, and I was surer than ever that they marked the passage of Crowder and his band. It was more than likely that the man, burning with desire to recapture us, would follow, and his judgment would tell him that we were fleeing towards Morgan.

When we entered the woods I gave Old Put his head, trusting that his sense of smell or instinct would enable him to take me in the right path. And so it did. About the middle of the afternoon I thought I heard voices, and slipping from the horse's back I crept through the bushes in the direction of the sound.

My fears were realized. It was Crowder and his men, and among them was Miss Howard, a captive. They had met her, so I knew, in her rash flight, and they had nothing to do but pick her up and bring her with them.

Never was a prize taken more easily. She was sitting now on a log, her face downcast, her whole attitude expressing despair. Crowder, on the contrary, looked triumphant, and I judged that everything bad in the man's nature had come to the surface. The girl had good cause now to pray for a rebel.

I lay for a while in the bushes in the most painful uncertainty. I was glad that I had come back, glad that I had postponed "duty" for a little; but yet I did not see how I might take Miss Howard from the hands of these men. I could not attack so many with any hope of success, and I could think of nothing to do but to wait.

I crept back among the bushes to my horse, and there where the underbrush was thickest we stood for a while, still within hearing of the men, who, seeming to have no fear of interference, made a great deal of noise.

I think it was about an hour that I waited, and I remember no hour of greater torture in my life. Then I was startled by the sound of hoof-beats coming in my direction. I moved a little to one side, keeping my horse and my-

self screened by the thicket. I could give these sounds but one meaning—Crowder and his men were on the march again. But I still saw above the bushes the glow of his camp-fire, and from that point came the faint murmur of voices.

The noise of the hoof-beats approached, and then the most of Crowder's men rode past me. I counted them, and all were there save Crowder and one other. The girl, too, was missing, and I could not doubt that the three were still by the camp-fire. I wondered what this movement meant, but I prudently waited to see.

The men rode on through the bushes and into the open; they did not stop there, but continued at a steady gait, their figures becoming smaller and smaller until at last I saw them on the top of a distant hill. The sun was low in the west behind them, and they hovered there a moment, so many black lines against the red disk. Then they passed over and were lost to sight.

My heart throbbed with joy. These men had been sent on some expedition, probably

to be gone for hours, if not all night, leaving Crowder and another alone with the girl.

One is forced in troublous times to decide quickly, and I did not hesitate now. It would be strange if in a desperate cause and with great motives I could not have a fair chance with two men. Moreover, the advantage of surprise would be on my side. I looked carefully to my pistols and sword, and then leaving the horse, crept again towards the campfire.

The girl was still sitting on a log in an unchanged attitude of despair, and I felt a great pity for her. Crowder hovered near her, and the other man, a low-browed fellow, lay by the fire. I paused where my body was still hid by the bushes and raised my pistol to take aim at Crowder. Pistols are uncertain except at very short range, but I believed that with care I could hit him. He was a black-hearted villain, and he deserved such a death. I looked down the barrel and drew the sight on his left temple, but at that moment and by a curious chance he shifted his position. I moved the pistol muzzle, too, and then I

found that I was looking directly into Miss Howard's face, and not Crowder's. He was on the far side of her. I lowered my weapon until he should come in range again, and I heard him speak to her.

"It was obliging of you, Miss Howard," he said, "to leave that infernal rebel and come back to us."

She did not raise her head nor did she answer.

"You had enough of him and now you choose better company—mine, you know," he said with a leer.

She raised her head now, and I saw an indignant flush on her face. Her eyes sparkled too.

"You would not dare to talk so before him, rebel as he is," she said.

"Oho!" cried Crowder. "It's a pretty bird that can sing when it wants to. So she regrets her rebel already, does she? Won't I do as well as he does? I'm as big as he is, and I know that he isn't half such a beauty as I am—is he, Derrick?"

"No, captain," replied Derrick, the man

sitting by the fire, stretching his mouth in a grin. "He'd never take the prize in a beauty show if you entered at the same time."

Crowder thrust his thumbs in the armholes of his vest and swaggered back and forth before the fire. There was a curious sort of dark fascination about the man, and doubtless he had been a crusher of hearts among women of his own type. He was of great size and as lithe as a panther. But he was then in one of his most villainous moods, and when I saw the face that he bent upon Miss Howard I raised my pistol again.

I could not pull the trigger. Much as this man deserved death, and great as was the need of Miss Howard, I was unable to shoot him or any one from ambush. My heart recoiled from the deed with an immeasurable repugnance. I hesitated, and shifted my position a little, not knowing what to do. My foot came down on a piece of dead wood, and it broke with a snap.

The man Derrick, whose face was turned in my direction, sprang to his feet, and I, knowing that concealment was now vain, also

leaped up. Derrick fired at me with his rifle, the bullet whistling unpleasantly near my ear, and in return I gave him a pistol-ball that dropped him.

I fired my second pistol at Crowder, but the bullet missed, and drawing my sword I ran in. He, too, missed with his pistol, and also drew a sword that he carried at his side, as a badge of leadership, I thought, for I did not take him to be a swordsman. But I was mistaken, as he faced me with a laugh that expressed confidence and triumph. He was in truth a swordsman.

The girl uttered a cry when she saw me, half raised up from the log, and then sank back again, remaining there, her face white and her gleaming eyes fixed upon us with an intentness like that of a fascinated child.

"So it is our fine rebel, again?" said Crowder. "I have the girl now, and I'm glad that you've come. I can make my job complete."

His whole manner showed expectation of an easy triumph and I was willing to humour him a little.

"The game is between us two," I said. "The better man wins."

"And she goes to the conqueror," he said, nodding towards Miss Howard. "I am glad of it because she pleases me. Bid her farewell, you rebel."

"It is true I am a rebel," I said, "but I do not allow any one to call me so. You shall pay for it, Mr. Crowder."

For answer he flourished his sword about his head, making the blade whistle. He was a grandiloquent fellow, but I knew by his grasp upon the hilt that he understood the weapon. Also he was much larger than I.

The sun was just setting, and we stood in its last glow. Poised on the edge of the horizon, it looked at us with its great red eye, as we stood there, two men, each bent upon having the other's life. I do not think that I am bloodthirsty, but his insults and insinuations, to which the girl had been compelled to listen, filled me with rage; moreover, all other things aside, I could not but choose what he chose, and that was his life or mine.

"On guard!" he said, and he thrust at me with his heavy sword.

I caught his weapon upon my lighter blade and turned the thrust aside.

He laughed in glee and shook his black hair.

"You know the sword," he said.

"A little."

"So much the better."

I glanced at the girl. Her eyes were still upon us, as if she could not take them away, and her figure seemed to have lost the power of movement. Her yellow hair was like flame in the sunset glow. I also saw in her eyes a great fear. Yet I felt none myself. Not in vain, I believed, had I been called the finest swordsman in all the Northern army, and I had been victor there too over the first blades of France, the home of swordsmen.

"On guard!" he cried again in joyous tones, and thrust straight at my heart. I turned the blade aside as before, but I knew then by the feel of his steel against mine that his was a powerful wrist, and his style was that of a master. I would need all my skill,

and I felt my blood leap with the thrill of conflict.

"On your guard, too, Captain Crowder!" I cried, and I thrust so suddenly that only the turn of a hair saved him. His eyes sparkled.

"It is more than a little that you know the sword, Mr. Rebel," he said, "and again I say so much the better."

"As you will. Touched!"

My blade cut the cloth of his coat.

"Thrust for thrust!" he cried.

The point of his sword slipped through my sleeve.

Then we closed, and for a while neither spoke, nothing being heard but our heavy breathing, the tread of feet upon the leaves, and the sharp ring of steel against steel. I gave silent thanks to myself that my blade was of trusty metal, as I knew now that I had before me a swordsman of the first degree, a man who brought to great skill the aid of vast strength. I felt a curious pride presently when I saw a thin red line appear across his wrist. My sword had flicked him

as it passed, barely cutting the skin. He seemed not to notice it, and the next moment his blade went through my clothing and I felt its cold edge against my side. It was a narrow escape and I became cautious.

I still felt the sunset glow on my face, and I saw it on his. The red light exaggerated his features, giving to them a look of malignant ferocity. But he laughed. He yet seemed to have no fear of the result. We fell apart a few moments later and each drew a deep breath.

"You fight well, Mr. Rebel," he said.

"I repeat that I do not allow any one to call me a rebel."

"I'm willing to pay the price if you can collect it."

The girl did not stir. The sunset glow now failed to reach her, but I saw her eyes shining through the dusk. The dead eyes of the dead man beside me stared up, but neither Crowder nor I took notice.

"Are you ready again?" I asked. "I do not wish to attack a tired man."

He sprang forward and lunged at me

fiercely. But I turned his blade aside and flicked him across the wrist.

"Have a care," I said; "that was rash, and remember a lady is looking on."

He shut his teeth and the smile went out of his eyes. I could read them as if I had a printed page before me. He meant now to end it. He had dallied long enough, and he would show me his best. I felt my muscles grow tense, and I waited ready for his coming.

He pressed me now with all his strength and skill. I had never before met a swordsman more expert, and none so strong. He knew all the tricks of all the schools, French, English, Prussian, Austrian — where he learned them I cannot guess—and there was none that he did not try. I felt myself slowly giving ground, and I saw the look of triumph, gone a while from his face, come back again. I saw, too, the face of the girl white now with fear, and just beyond her stood a great horse looking at us with eyes of wonder.

"You fight well, rebel, but not well enough," said Crowder.

"It is to be seen," I said.

His sword was a line of light before me, but his heavy breathing was growing heavier, and I was not yet tired. His blade slipped once more through my coat, and when it came back a drop of blood gleamed redly on it.

"There will be more to come next time," he said.

"There will be no next time," I replied.

For answer, he thrust savagely at me, but I was gathering all my strength anew, and I turned his blade aside. Then I pressed him back. He in his turn was forced to give ground, and his look of triumph again died. The rim of the sun just showed on the horizon, and the twilight was falling in the forest. Crowder's face darkened, but I could yet see his eyes plainly, and I still read all his emotions there. There was surprise, alarm, and then terror. I judged that the man had fought many times before, and always had been the victor.

I pressed him back farther. The twilight deepened in the glade, but our swords flashed in lines of light, and I still read his eyes. I

stumbled slightly on a root. He slashed at me with a cry of joy, but my blade slipped under his and drew blood.

"No wonder you fight well when she is waiting for you," he said with a slight nod towards the girl.

"That remark may cost you your life," I said. I hoped that she did not hear him. It had been my plan as I drove him back to wound him seriously, but not to kill him, however much he deserved death.

"You have not won yet," he said.

"But I win now," I replied, and breaking down his guard I slashed him across the arm.

He uttered a cry of pain and dropped his sword, while I, leaning over, wiped mine on the dry leaves.

"Go now," I said, "I am done with you."

He picked up his weapon in an instant in his left hand and sprang at me like a tiger. I barely saved myself from his treacherous attack, leaping aside just in time. Even then I meant to give him only a disabling wound,

but he slipped slightly and the point of my weapon entering his heart he fell dead beside his dead comrade.

"Come," I said to the girl, "let us hasten."

It was not so much the fear of pursuit, though that was a consideration, as it was the desire to get her away from those dead men that urged me on.

"O Mr. Marcel, I thank God that you came!" she exclaimed like one awakening from a dream.

And that was all she said for some time.

I hastily helped her upon Old Put, and we set off. The twilight turned into darkness, the trees became ghostly, and then were tipped with silver by-and-bye as the moon came out. It was a fine clear moon, and soon all the forest was silver under its rays. Again I began to feel exhilaration. I was not wholly sorry now for what had happened. She had seen me fight, and I had been a victor before her. I could feel no remorse because of the two men who lay back there in the woods, and the death of Crowder was almost sure to stop the

pursuit even should his comrades return at an early hour.

I said nothing, but I covertly watched Miss Howard, and I saw the colour return to her cheeks and the light to her eyes. Not even such scenes as those through which we had passed could daunt her long. Yet we went on for many hours before I spoke. At last I asked:

"Why did you run away?"

"Do you know, Mr. Marcel, I have been asking myself that question, and I have not found an answer."

"I suppose that it was your feeling of loyalty to England."

"I suppose so."

"You will not try to run away again?"

"I certainly will not."

This with emphasis.

She did not speak again for an hour, and then she said quite suddenly:

"O Mr. Marcel, what a swordsman you are!"

CHAPTER XI

HARLEY HALL

We went on through the maze of hills and valleys, all wild and desolate, and I looked in vain for a house. I did not wish the girl to spend another night in the open, and I felt worried when I found no shelter.

I was walking now, leading the way, while she followed on Old Put, and when I glanced back once or twice I did not see my troubles reflected in her face. Much of her weariness seemed to have passed, and the vivid English roses were blooming again in her cheeks. Stray curls of yellow hair slipped from her cap and fell down the whitest neck in the world, lying there like gold on snow. Well, if I was burdened with a captive she was at least worth while.

The day had passed its zenith. The blood-red sun, like a pirate ship, swam peacefully in the sky's blue sea. Afar on the dim

horizon's rim lay the frosty touch of winter, but around us the world glowed warm in the sunshine. I still searched wood and open, but beheld nothing save the peace of the forest. She saw my face as I looked for something that I did not find, and she said:

"The king is heir to a great estate; it is wild now, but what a land he will make of it when he needs it!"

"I have heard of heirs who were disinherited," I replied.

"So have I," she said, "but you have not known them."

"People are often too sure," I replied. "They ought to examine their own minds. I believe it was old Socrates who said, 'Know thyself.'"

"But he gave that advice only to men."

"Indeed? And why did not he give it to women too?"

"They do not need it."

I glanced back at her, but she met my look with an air of extreme confidence. She shook her head a little as if she were threaten-

ing me, and the yellow curls quivered on her white neck.

"Don't seek political arguments with me, Mr. Marcel," she said.

"Why not?"

"I begin to have a friendly feeling for you, and I don't like to see you defeated so often."

She did not seem to be worried by anything whatever, but as for me, my troubles grew. I have my doubts whether the position of captor is more enviable than that of captive. I was still wasting time—though not of my own choice—and perhaps getting farther and farther from Morgan. Moreover, that pirate ship of a sun was going far over in the western heavens, preparing to hide behind the curve of the sea, as it were, and what was I to do with the girl? There was no cave or hollow here.

We reached the crest of a ridge, and Old Put, raising his head, gave a neigh, soft and low, but full of triumph. His keen eye saw first. A faint spire seemingly made of silver mist rose above the distant trees. The girl's eyes followed mine.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Smoke," I replied, "perhaps from a camp-fire, perhaps from a house, but I should judge from the situation that it is the latter. Those trees are growing on just such a gentle hill as a man would choose for the site of his home."

"And yet," she said, "I am suspicious of everybody."

"Of everybody?" I asked, and I looked at her reproachfully.

"Well, of everybody but you," she replied grudgingly.

"We must take the risk," I said. "It may be your friends, or mine, or neither. This is a wild region, you know."

"Mr. Marcel," she replied, "I am not afraid to follow wherever you may lead."

She wanted to mollify me, I dare say, and I accepted the attempt. It was my due.

We started on at a brisker pace, cheered by the thought of shelter and perhaps a bounteous table and good beds. It is astonishing how soon man becomes reconciled to the discomforts of civilization. Even Old Put

pricked up his ears and looked eagerly ahead, though by-and-bye he began to grow cautious and distrustful.

"That's right, old horse," I said. "It's well to be watchful, and your pose becomes you, but I'm sure that we're not going into danger this time."

He gave no answer, merely wagging his head in silence.

We turned into an old road, almost grown up in weeds, but nevertheless a road, once, at least.

"It is a house! Look! I see the brick walls shining!" exclaimed Miss Howard.

A house it was beyond a doubt, and my prediction had proved correct. It stood on the crest of the hill which we had seen from afar, surrounded by noble poplar-trees planted at regular spaces, as if by the hand of man. There was a large lawn, but like the road it was choked with grass and weeds, and the fine iron fence surrounding it was rusted and partly thrown down.

Nevertheless the house, despite its decay, shone for us with cheer and comfort. The

rays of the dying sun lingered on the red brick walls and tinted them with vivid hues. The shutters were thrown back and the glass of the windows streamed with the western fire.

"It is inhabited," said Miss Howard. "There can be no doubt of it."

"Certainly it is inhabited," I replied, continuing our pleasantry of the night before. "This, Miss Howard, is the Hotel Marcel. It is true that it sits far out in the wilderness and its guests are not many, but I shall see to your comfort while you stay."

"I shall decline to stop unless I have for my dinner humming-birds' tongues, ortolan, and all the other things those gluttonous old Romans were so fond of," she replied, and she laughed.

Persiflage and laugh alike showed her relief, and I too felt many of my troubles take unto themselves the wings of the morning. Here, besides food and shelter, I might also find news of Morgan.

It was in truth a place of most comfortable appearance, evidently the house of a man of

wealth and large outlook, a two-and-a-half story brick of solid structure with many outbuildings, and far back in the rear the huddled cabins that told of the slaves' quarter. The mansion of a rich up-country planter, so I judged.

As we approached, a man in the ordinary clothes of a South Carolina farmer came from behind the house and gazed at us, but this I knew could not be the owner. He looked too common.

We came steadily on, the girl riding and I walking by her side. I was certain now that it was all right, reassured by the appearance of the man, staring at us with the ordinary curiosity of the rural districts. He was joined presently by another fellow similar in look, and I judged them to be labourers on the estate. The sound of some one singing behind the house came to our ears. All breathed of bucolic ease.

"Alight, Miss Howard," I said, "and partake of the ease the Hotel Marcel offers."

I held out my hands. She took them and sprang lightly to the ground. Her touch

thrilled me so strangely that I was annoyed with myself and spoke gruffly to Old Put.

"Why, Mr. Marcel!" she exclaimed. "Have you hurt yourself?"

"Yes," I replied, "I stumbled, but it was only a trifle, and it's over now."

I opened the iron gate and we entered the lawn, following a dilapidated brick walk towards the portico that adorned the centre of the house. Great double doors of oak, studded with brass nails, connected the portico with the house, and as we approached they opened, giving exit to a man whom I knew at once to be the master of the mansion.

The stranger was of distinguished appearance, having about him the indefinable air which comes from a knowledge of the best world and one's own inborn sense of dignity. He was about thirty years of age, tall, light of complexion, and dressed in the fashionable costume of the day. I noticed particularly that his hair, tied in a queue, was powdered as finely as if he were a London dandy.

"Ah, a lady and a gentleman!" he ex-

claimed, hastening forward with the most hospitable air in the world. "You are my guests. It shall not be said that Harley Hall turned only closed doors to any one at such a time as this."

His accent showed cultivation, and I clearly saw that he was a man of breeding. I felt great relief to have fallen into such hands.

"We accept your hospitality," I replied, "before you can offer it to us twice, for we are indeed worn with a long journey."

His eyes rested for a moment on Miss Howard. It was a swift glance, but it was one of wonderful keenness, and the edge of it was admiration.

"Your wife, in truth, looks tired, though she keeps a brave face," he said, "but we have plenty of room there."

He turned away a moment to make a gesture towards his house, and then I beheld the red blood flushing Miss Howard's whole face and even dyeing her neck. I saw in a flash our position and what construction could be placed upon it, a man and a woman roaming

alone, save each other, through the wilderness.

"Forgive me," I said in a low tone, "but we must accept it. It will not matter, because he will never see us again."

She did not say nay, but the deep red remained in her face.

He called to one of the men whom we had seen watching our approach, and bade him take Old Put to the stable.

"Give him plenty of oats and ten ears of corn," he said.

Then he looked inquiringly at me. I understood.

"We rode farther than we thought," I said. "In fact, our journey required some haste, and my wife's horse unfortunately died of exhaustion."

"That is bad," he said; "you must be provided for in some way."

The hospitality of our South Carolina planters is unbounded, but the generous sympathy in his voice made me warm to him. Here, indeed, was a friend in need. Moreover, I did not forget the most important of my

errands. He might put me again on the trail of Morgan. He glanced once at my red coat, but asked no question about it. Fine breeding held him back, and I knew that whether English or American I might freely claim the shelter of his house.

"My name," he said, as we entered the portico, "is Sinclair Harley, and this is Harley Hall, which my father built out here on the skirts of the wilderness in '46, three years before I was born. I bid you and your lady welcome to it, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Wrenham, John Wrenham," I said. "I am from Charleston, though some time ago, and we are bound for Charlotte, in North Carolina."

He bowed to the lady and myself, and did not intimate a desire for further knowledge, nor did I vouchsafe any. It was a polite day, and those too were troublous times in which it had become a wise custom to talk but little of one's self.

I recalled his name, when he mentioned it, as that of a rich young planter whose father had gone far into what was the backwoods

in his time and had built up a great estate. I had never met him, but he had a reputation for probity and firmness. Again I felt gladness because we were fallen into such good hands.

"I trust that you will accept my apologies for the look of my place," he said. "I have just returned to it after an absence of many months, and this being doubtful territory, I find that it has been plundered in my absence, probably by a very dangerous band of desperadoes, led by one Flournoy. I believe they call themselves 'Regulators.'"

"I should think that with a dozen men you could hold this strong house against any number of them," I said.

"I dare say I could," he replied carelessly, "but this is a particularly dangerous band. They have a very crafty leader in Flournoy, who has as his lieutenant a singularly bold fellow named Crowder."

I was startled a little at the mention of Crowder. I had believed all along that he was under the leadership of some one more cunning than himself. He was too reckless

by half, and I was sure his little force had been but a mere detachment from the main band. It was lucky that we had not run across the others, but now, behind these strong walls of brick, I felt that the girl was safe.

We entered the house, and passed into a wide dark hall, equipped with massive furniture which I knew had been brought from England. On the walls were some old portraits, but furniture, walls, portraits, and floors alike were covered with dust. Everything here, as on the lawn, showed neglect and decay.

"You see that my apologies were well timed," he said, looking at us with a humorous eye.

"One need not apologize in time of war for such as this," I replied.

Miss Howard said nothing. She had become singularly silent, and when I looked at her once more that deep stain of red was still on brow and neck. Well, it was not my fault.

One of the men who had gone on before threw open a door leading from the hall, and

we entered a great apartment, evidently the drawing-room, where a most cheerful sight saluted our eyes. In the wide fire-place a fire of hickory logs was burning and blazing, while a pair of huge brass fire-dogs gleamed in the merry light. A grateful warmth and glow filled the air.

The drawing-room was much of a piece with the hall, showing all the relics of ancient splendour. A thick carpet, torn and stained in places, covered the floor, and its deep tints reflected the ruddy glow of the fire.

"Light the candles, Perkins," said Harley to the man, as he wheeled a cushioned chair in front of the fire for Miss Howard, "and do you imitate me, Mr. Wrenham, and warm yourself. I can conceive how tired you both are."

I sank into a chair and let my muscles relax. Miss Howard, too, leaned back in an attitude of ease, and spread out her hands to the fire. The man Perkins lighted the candles as he was bid, though there was little need of them, the great fire filling the room with its glow.

I glanced through the window and saw the sun sinking behind the desolate hills. The night was falling cold and dark, and the house was warm and kind. Harley read my thoughts in my face, for, smiling, he said:

"You arrived just in time, Mr. Wrenham. I am glad indeed that my house could afford shelter at such a moment."

Miss Howard was looking about her with an inquiring gaze, and I knew what she sought. It was the lady of the house—his wife, or his sister, or at least some female servant—but Harley did not seem to notice. The man, Perkins, went quietly from the room at the low-spoken command of his master, but returned in a few minutes bearing on a waiter three glasses in which spoons clinked.

"Ordinarily I would not offer liquor to a lady, Mrs. Wrenham," said Harley, "but I think you should drink this, and I beg you to do so."

When we lifted our glasses he clinked his against mine and said:

"To your pleasant journey, Mr. Wrenham."

He was an agreeable man. There was a certain mellowness about his manners that I liked. Manners may not make the man, but they certainly furnish a very large contribution, and for a casual acquaintance they are the best recommendation.

Then I drank the whisky, which was of a high class—perhaps stored for twenty years in the cellars of Harley Hall—and the grateful glow that permeated the room permeated my system too.

"Don't you find it lonely here, Mr. Harley?" I asked.

"No, not in ordinary times," he replied. "It's a great plantation, twenty thousand acres or so—no credit to me though, it was my father who acquired it—and there is much to look after. Besides, the woods are full of game, large and small, and I am something of a sportsman. My father, too, left many good old books, still here in the cases, which I read now and then, though perhaps not as often as I ought."

Through a half-opened door I glanced into a room, evidently the library, and there I saw

a case of books gleaming through the glass, heavy and rich in their bindings of morocco and half calf. I had no doubt there were other such.

"And now, Mrs. Wrenham," said Harley, "as you are refreshed a little, doubtless you would like to retire to your room for a while. Here it is across the hall."

He pointed towards a closed door.

"And perhaps your husband would like to accompany you and rest also," he said politely.

He was not looking towards her, and he did not see what a brilliant hue of red overspread her face, but I said hastily:

"Not at all, Mr. Harley; what my wife needs is to be alone. That will restore her strength."

"As you will," he replied. "I am the gainer, for then I shall have your company here by the fireside, and guests are none too common in these parts and these times to be neglected."

Julia rose to go, and he gave her his arm.

"Dinner will be ready in an hour," he said, as she disappeared behind the door.

When he came back he sank down in the chair that she had left and turned his face to the firelight. It was a fine face, smooth-shaven, high-browed, and intellectual.

"These are dangerous times, Mr. Wrenham," he said, "for a man to be travelling on long journeys with his wife and without a strong escort."

I flushed a little at his implied rebuke.

"Necessity is not a considerate master, Mr. Harley," I replied, "and in dangerous times one must risk dangers."

"Don't infer that I meant to criticise you," he said quickly. "I was merely thinking of that same stern necessity to which you allude. Suppose that we have our glasses filled again. You have travelled hard and long, and it will not hurt you."

I was not loath, and Perkins replenished the tray. Mr. Harley took a glass in his hand and looked meditatively at the golden bubbles floating towards the brim. His face was very thoughtful.

"Mr. Wrenham," he said, "I envy you."

"Why so?" I asked, somewhat surprised at his comment. "You are a rich man, the owner of this magnificent estate, and I—I, for all you know, am but a mere wanderer about the earth without a shilling to my name."

"All that you say is true," he replied. "But you have something that I have not and which I want."

"What is that?" I asked, my surprise increasing.

"Love."

"Love?"

"Yes, love; accomplished love. As you say, you may not have a shilling to your name, but you have what is worth far more than all the shillings in these thirteen colonies and Britain put together—a young and beautiful wife, a wife who I know is as good as she is beautiful, tender, devoted. Did I not see her glance hang upon you? Ah, man, man, again I say I envy you!"

I looked at him curiously, but he did not seem to notice me, as he sat there, staring

into the coals, the red firelight flickering over his fine features.

"You asked me if I did not grow lonely here sometimes," he resumed, and now he seemed to be talking to himself rather than to me, "and I said that I did not, but I do. What I miss is a wife, young, beautiful and tender like yours, a wife whose morning kiss, as fresh as the dew and as pure, I might feel upon my lips, a wife whose voice like the soft tones of organ music I might hear through all the rooms of the house. Yes, Mr. Wrenham, I do get lonely at times."

He looked at me, and there was such melancholy in his eyes that I felt sorry for him. So much living alone is not good for people, and I felt myself at liberty to say so.

"But what can one do?" he replied earnestly. "I am not deeply stirred by this war. I do not care to fight in it. The Americans say that the English oppress them; it may be so, yet if the Americans win I have no doubt that they will oppress themselves quite as much."

" True, perhaps; yet it is a privilege worth fighting for."

He laughed and sipped his liquor.

" That is so," he replied. " Man loves his delusions, and as he is happier with them perhaps he ought to have them."

Then he talked of other matters, leaving the war alone, and I found his conversation graceful and pleasing. The man Perkins came in and replenished the fire with more hickory logs, and the blaze was never permitted to die down.

" Has Mr. Wrenham's horse been fed as I ordered, Perkins? " asked Harley.

" Yes, sir," replied the man, " and he was so hungry that after he finished up the ten ears of corn we gave him ten more."

" That was well done, Perkins," said the master of Harley Hall, " and now, Mr. Wrenham, as the hour is up, we will go in to dinner."

I rose, surprised that the time had passed so fast.

CHAPTER XII

A SHADOW AT A BANQUET

"WILL you knock at the door and bid your wife to come?" said Harley as we passed into the hall. "I would send a servant, but there is none convenient, save that awkward fellow, Perkins."

I was compelled to tap but once on the door, and then Julia came forth. I do not know what trifles of woman's adornment she had found in the room, but somehow, although the dress was the same, she was changed when she appeared. Perhaps it was a new ribbon around her neck, or a new arrangement of her hair, which was drawn high upon her head, but now the capricious English girl who rode with me through the forest walked with a stateliness and dignity as new to me as it was surprising. The gay girl had become, for the moment, the great lady.

I saw that flash of admiration appear

again in Harley's eyes and hang for a moment on his eyelids, but I did not blame him; on the contrary, I would have blamed him did he not admire.

"Permit me to take you in to dinner, Mrs. Wrenham," he said, offering his arm, "and as for you, Mr. Wrenham, I fear that you will have to follow alone."

He looked over his shoulder and laughed, but I was content, for I was in truth most hungry, and it was a welcome fact to know that I was walking towards the dinner-table.

The dining-room was at the far end of the hall, and through the open door pleasant odours already came. Just before we entered I noticed three rifles leaning against the wall of the hall, and half hidden by the arms of a great chair. I was surprised, for a moment, but not so when I reflected on the wisdom of having fire-arms handy in such a dangerous country.

The dining-room was a fine apartment, of a good width but much greater length, with a brass chandelier which contained six lighted candles hanging from the centre of

the ceiling. Six other candles, burning with a steady flame, rested on the table, and the light of all twelve fell over some good china, though I noted that the scanty array of knives, forks, and spoons seemed to be of pewter. Smoking dishes gave forth the odour that had greeted us as we came up the hall. Four or five men, rather roughly clad, all save one, were waiting, and sat down at the table with us. Here as elsewhere there was no sign whatever of woman's presence.

The men were introduced to us as employees of high rank on the estate, the one of good dress turning out to be the chaplain.

"There are so many people about here in ordinary times that it keeps one man busy looking after the health of their souls, and I am sure that they could not have a better than Clymer," said Harley.

Mr. Clymer was of about Harley's own age, with a thin and keen but somewhat sanctimonious face. He was one man who looked his trade. He, like the others, had little to say, leaving the talk to Harley, who sat at the head of the table and carved.

"I find that I must always be making apologies," he said, "and permit me at this moment to add one more; it is for the absence of the silver, which was stolen while I was away, by Flournoy, I suppose, and which he has probably sold by this time in Charleston. Ah, well, I have said a long farewell to it. At least I am resigned."

Then he addressed himself more particularly to Julia, talking of many light topics, and I noticed that, neither by direction nor indirection, did he inquire further as to who we were, whither we came, and whence we were going.

If the appointments of the room and table were somewhat dilapidated, the food was plentiful and good. There was beef, a haunch of succulent venison shot in the neighbouring forest, bread and vegetables, and a good wine, poured from long-necked, dark bottles.

"The robbers, by some happy chance, overlooked this," said Harley, as he poured the rich liquid into Julia's glass, "and you must drink it, Mrs. Wrenham, as it is the most perfect tonic for a tired frame that I

have ever tasted. It is a Hungarian wine that my father imported."

When I tasted my own glass I knew that his words about the wine were true. Fresh life leaped into my veins and my head throbbed with a new exhilaration.

The good-humour of Harley and the feeling of comradeship that he impressed upon us without effort were infectious. He seemed to take his losses at the hands of the robbers so easily, and to be so glad to give us his hospitality, that our hearts grew light, and it was a dinner of rare enjoyment.

I did not forget amid the courses and the talk my great object—that is, to find the way to Morgan, and by-and-bye I led up to it, though deviously. I hazarded a guess as to the general's present location.

"I think he has gone towards the Broad River," said Harley, "and I hear that Tarleton is after him. I told you, Mr. Wrenham, that I do not feel deeply about this war. In fact, I am unable to make up my mind on the subject, and it is a happy condition."

"Why so?" I asked.

"Because events do not disturb my equanimity," he replied. "Now I can await the approaching conflict of Tarleton and Morgan without any apprehensions. Not so with others, for whatever its result many must be cast down."

"But is that a wise view?" asked Julia. "Those who never suffer much also are never happy much."

"That is, you prefer the see-saw?"

"Yes, because if one end of the see-saw is down it will be high up the next moment."

The colour in her face was brilliant, and she seemed to be moved by a revulsion of spirits after our many hardships and dangers. Never had I seen a woman more sparkling. She had an odd mind, one that saw the humorous side of things, and she made us laugh again and again, though her wit was never bitter. I now saw that flash of admiration reappear more than once in the eyes of Harley, and I repeat that I did not blame him. Even the sardonic parson smiled, and the reign of good feeling was unbroken.

I noticed that the silent men ate heavily

and all except Clymer appeared awkward, but I did not wonder at the latter, as perhaps in this isolated district they were unused to the society of women. After we had been at the table about half an hour a man appeared at the door, and our host, excusing himself, went out and talked with the stranger for a moment or two. When he returned to his chair he said casually:

"It was about some horses which I have in a field several miles from here. Farm-hands do not always choose suitable moments for the delivery of messages."

He poured wine again, and we drank to our host's good health. Miss Howard still talked with the greatest vivacity. It seemed to me that her spirits had now become somewhat excessive, as if she were suffering from mental excitement, but after all, it was no surprise when one considers the strangeness of the situation and the relaxation after so great a strain.

I was sitting with my face turned to a window opening out on a narrow piazza half shaded by the pillars. But I could see as

I glanced occasionally toward the glass that the night was still dark, with light clouds drifting by the moon. Then I saw something pass on the piazza in front of the glass. It was the figure of a man, and I caught a fleeting glimpse of the face.

That glimpse was enough. I recognised on the instant one of the men who had been with Crowder, and from the way he strolled along the piazza I judged that he was free and at his ease.

The wine on my lips became as bitter as death. I seemed to see everything in one gleam of light, and I know that my eyes must have expressed all my thoughts had any one been looking. Then came that moment of icy calm which sometimes follows a terrible awakening, and in a moment I made my resolve.

I looked across at our host. How his face had changed in that brief instant! The thin, high-bred features were now sharp and cruel. There was something about that lip that I did not like, and when he flashed his look of admiration once more upon Miss Howard

there was that in the look which would cause the heart of a good woman, did she see, to tremble within her.

The dinner approached its end. Harley filled a last glass of wine, and with the edge of his white teeth showing and a side glance at Miss Howard, he said:

"A proper ending to your journey."

I could have dashed my glass, wine and all, into his face, but I drank the toast nevertheless, and with a steady hand replaced the glass upon the table.

"I have no doubt," said Harley, "that Mr. and Mrs. Wrenham are now thoroughly worn out. Do you wish to retire?"

Again that flush, deeper than ever, dyed the girl's face and neck, but I said:

"Mrs. Wrenham wishes to go, but I shall stay. My wife's nerves are somewhat upset. If you do not mind I shall sleep on the large sofa in the drawing-room, where until my eyelids close I can see the firelight flickering over the floor. It's a habit that I have, and if you don't mind I'll continue it here."

"Oh, certainly," he replied, "but you'll sit

with me a little while after Mrs. Wrenham has gone. As I told you, I'm a lonely man, and I purpose to make the most of my guests. You'll forgive me, I know."

His lips curved in a smile, but there was no enigma to me in that smile.

Miss Howard excused herself and withdrew. I noticed her keenly, and I saw that the pupils of her eyes were still dilated. Her lips, too, moved slightly, as if she were expectant. I wondered, but I could arrive at no conclusion.

When she was gone all the others except the clergyman excused themselves and went out, leaving the three of us, Clymer, Harley, and me. Harley still talked lightly, but the clergyman sat silent and sardonic.

"Let us have just one more glass together," said Harley. "I do not wish to boast, Mr. Wrenham, but I'll wager that in your travels through South Carolina you do not often get such wine as this."

"No, I do not," I replied, and I spoke the truth.

We drank the wine, and again I felt that

flush of new life through my veins. My strength seemed to leap up for the conflict.

Harley was silent for a few minutes, and I did not choose to speak first. In the next room the great fire still blazed and crackled, and outside the clouds that floated before the moon grew heavier and darker.

"Mr. Wrenham," said Harley presently, "I have told you that I was a lonely man."

"You have."

"And I said also that I envied you. I named the object of that envy, a woman young, beautiful, tender, and above all of a fine mind and spirit. I am glad to see that you have such good taste. Youth and beauty would soon pall without a soul and mind to match them. Do you not think so, Mr. Wrenham?"

"I certainly think so."

"I have seen how she bore herself during this dinner and the admiration that I formed for her has increased. In short, I find that I cannot live without her."

"What do you mean?" I cried, though I had not expected less.

"I propose," he replied, "that while you take profit by my help to speed yourself on your journey, you leave your wife behind."

There come, though rarely, moments when we wish to sink our fingers in a man's neck and feel his breath die within him. Such a moment had come to me, but I was able to remain calm, even to keep my fingers still.

"Why?" I asked.

"Why? Man, why do you ask such a question? The times are troubled. All journeys are dangerous, and particularly so for women. You could go on, while she would remain here, well treated."

"I do not care to continue my journey thus," I replied.

"There are different kinds of journeys," he said, and he showed more of his white teeth than ever before.

"Wherever I go, there my wife goes too," I replied.

"I am sorry," he said, "because, Mr. Wrenham, I think you are taking some very unnecessary risks."

I did not reply, and again he was silent for

a while. My hand unconsciously stole towards the hilt of my sword—I had not taken it off when I came in to dinner—but I saw how foolish the movement was and drew it away again. During all our talk Clymer had said nothing, sitting there in the same blank silence.

"Mr. Wrenham," resumed Harley presently, "my opinion of you has fluctuated in the course of the evening. I do not know what I shall think a half-hour from now, but just at present I do not believe that your name is Wrenham."

"Your present opinion is correct," I said.

"I also have another opinion, subject to change," he continued, "which tells me that the lady in yonder is not your wife."

"Again you are correct."

"Then," he said with sudden fierceness, "what claim have you upon her that is better than mine?"

"If you put it in that crude way," I replied, "mine is the right of first possession, and I mean to enforce it."

I tapped the hilt of my sword as I spoke.

"He keeps who can," he said, and I could detect no trace of resentment in his tone.

Then he was silent again, and I studied him. We had escaped from a great danger when in Crowder's hands, but I knew that this man was much more formidable than that dead desperado had ever been.

"Mr. Harley," I said, "I too have fluctuating opinions of you, and just now I have a belief that your name is not Harley."

"You are correct."

"And I also have a belief, though I may be wrong, or I may change it a half-hour later, that your real name is Flournoy."

"Correct again," he said, and I distinctly saw a flash of pride in his eye. "The real Harley left this place in a great hurry, partly for his own safety and partly to join Greene, and I, seeing no reason why Harley Hall should be without a master, have graciously taken his place, and, for this evening, his name."

"So we arrive at an understanding," I said.

"We do," he continued, "and I should

add that one of my men has come with an account of a capture by my lieutenant, Crowder, of a young man and a young girl—the man an American and the girl English. But Crowder was a bungler; he let the man and the girl escape, and then he got himself killed by the man."

"So?" I said.

"Yes. Crowder had his good points, but finesse was not one of them. I must repair his mistakes. The man's name was Marcel, and the girl's Howard. I don't mind telling you that the girl in yonder is Miss Howard, and you are Mr. Marcel. As you are American and she is English, I shall be doing a good deed to keep you two apart."

While this discourse was going on, the so-called chaplain said nothing, sitting there with a blank, expressionless face as if the fate of either Flournoy or myself mattered little to him. I was moved by a sudden curiosity concerning him.

"And your chaplain here, or rather the man you introduced as chaplain," I said. "I suppose that as you were observing the law

of contradictions you introduced him as chaplain because he is the worst man of your band."

Flournoy looked curiously at the man. I never saw a more cynical gaze, and to my wonder a faint tint of red appeared on the cheeks of the alleged minister. Flournoy laughed softly.

"Singular as it may seem to you, Mr. Marcel," he said, "I told the truth when I was speaking of Clymer. Perhaps it was the only time, but nevertheless I did it then. My friend's name is Clymer, and he is a minister, or rather was, though he still officiates now, at the burial of a faithful comrade, for instance, or when it becomes necessary to speed a parting soul; a most useful man, and, moreover, he lends distinction and character to my band. I can add, too, that of all the men I have he is the fittest to lead a forlorn hope."

I thought I saw the lower lip of the chaplain tremble slightly. But he said nothing. Instead he filled his glass once more and drank it off at a draught, to be followed by another immediate refilling and emptying.

Flournoy again laughed softly.

"As I told you, Clymer is a most useful man, but he has his reward," he continued. "It is only with me that he could get such wine as that."

Clymer's lips moved as if he were about to reply, but I never knew what he would have said, as at that moment the door opened and Miss Howard came back into the room.

CHAPTER XIII

A VISION OF THE FIRE-LIGHT

SHE stood for a moment regarding us. Her cheeks were deep red and in her eyes shone that strange flame which I had noticed when she left the room, only it was more brilliant now. The fire-light from the next room flickered across her face as she stood before us, and she looked like a young goddess just stepped out of the darkness. Yet there was something in her beauty that I had never seen before, something wild and peculiar, that sent a shiver through me.

Flournoy regarded her with a look of admiration—his own particular kind of admiration that he did not seek to conceal—and to my surprise a deep flush overspread the face of Clymer. Unlike Flournoy, he seemed to admire from a distance.

"I cannot sleep to-night," she said, and her tone was reckless. "I do not know, but

I think that our travels and hardships in the forest have got upon my nerves. I fear the dark and the silence, so you will let me come back here with you, will you not?"

"Never was a guest more welcome!" cried Flournoy. "Here, gentlemen, help us clear a place for Miss Howard."

A significant light gleamed in his eyes. I noticed, too, that he called her by her right name. Her chair was placed again, her wine-glass was refilled, and Flournoy, summoning one of the men, bade him build anew the fire in the next room. When this was done the hickory logs crackled and blazed with fresh fervour, and through the open door the fire-light shone upon us, a great band of it falling across Miss Howard's face, deepening the tints of scarlet in her cheek and making her blonde hair shine like new-polished gold.

I tried to catch her eye and draw from her look some guess as to the meaning of her strange conduct. But she seemed resolute to avoid me. In fact, I was to her as one for-gotten, and all her attentions were for Flour-noy and the chaplain. As between these two

she seemed impartial in her preference, addressing herself now to one, now to the other, and laughing with both.

My blood chilled slowly, and I stared at her in wonder. Could this be the girl with whom I had travelled through the forest, and for whom I had risked my life more than once? Surely this was not the ideal of everything pure and beautiful in womanhood that I had created in my heart! I winked my eyelids to see if any mist had come before them. There was no mist. Perhaps I had been taking too much wine. I felt my head to see how it fared. There was nothing wrong with my head. So, it was the girl, and the girl alone, who made the difference.

"I should tell you," said Flournoy presently to Miss Howard, "that my name is not Harley at all, but I am Flournoy, of whom you perhaps have heard."

"I suspected that you were not Harley," she said, "and Mr. Marcel perhaps has told you who we are."

"He has. And you are disappointed because I am not Harley?"

"Not at all; on the contrary, I am delighted. Do you know, I fancy that the owner of this house is a dull man, a being wrapped up in his books, prim, sedate, and pedantic. I read it in his furniture. We women can see character in furniture and its arrangement. But you—you, Mr. Flournoy, you do not bother with the musty pages of dry books. You lead a life of romance out there in the forest, in the saddle with your sword on your thigh. And you, Mr. Clymer, you are ever by his side, the bravest of the brave."

The eyes of both men shone with pleasure. Clymer seemed to be waking up, and he could scarcely take his eyes from Miss Howard's face. That singular light was still in her eyes, and once when they met mine they passed on so swiftly that I could read nothing.

She reached for the wine-bottle herself, and her bare wrist gleamed white as snow across the table-cover.

"You will let me fill the glasses, Mr. Flournoy, will you not?" she asked.

"Let you!" he exclaimed. "The wine will become nectar then!"

She filled their glasses, and then held the mouth of the bottle over mine. But I turned it down with such a snap that I heard the glass crack.

"As you will," she said lightly, and poured the wine into her own glass.

"To the most beautiful woman who ever crossed the portal of Harley Hall," cried Flournoy, raising his glass on high. His eyes gleamed with reckless light.

"To the most daring raider that ever led his men in forest combat," she said, raising her own glass and clinking it against his. Clymer swung his alone. Then the two men drank deeply, but the girl's hand was unsteady and her glass fell smashing to the floor. I sat in cold silence.

"Never mind," said Miss Howard, laughing as they procured her a new glass. "I will fill it again directly."

Then she let her eyes fall upon Flournoy's face with a gaze that intoxicated him. She had never looked at me in that way.

I suppose that there is in every good woman, buried deep in her heart though it may be, a spark of what we call the devil, perhaps to lie there forever concealed, and perhaps at some unforeseen time to leap into glowing life. There was no other way in which I could account for Julia Howard.

"I told you, Mr. Flournoy," she said, "that your life seemed to me to be full of romance. If I were a man that is the life that I would care to lead, riding under the silver moon, no sordid thoughts, no care for the future, my home wheresoever I chanced to be, the wild thrill of the charge, the glory of victory, and then the gallop on to new triumphs. Ah, Mr. Flournoy, you are like one of the old knights of chivalry—you are in your way a king."

"You are right," he replied. "I am a king, but there is one thing I lack."

"What is that?"

"A queen."

He gazed boldly at her, and leaning across the table grasped at her white hand,

which lay on the edge. It was a chance then that her hand fell away. My heart grew sick within me.

"A queen!" she cried. "It is true. I had not thought of that. The king deserves his queen as the eagle deserves his mate. Why not drink to your future queen, Mr. Flournoy?"

He drank instantly to his queen, and as he spoke the words he stared straight into her eyes. I was tempted then to draw my sword and have done with him at once, but when I gazed across at the girl with her flushed cheeks and flaming eyes I thought to myself, "What now is there to save?" and held my hand.

I looked once more through the window, and beheld the pure moon now shining in the heavens. "I too would like to be riding under the silver moon," I said to myself, "and had I my wish there would be only Old Put and I."

The word "queen" seemed to have impressed Flournoy's mind. He repeated it over and over again. "Yes, it is a queen I

want," he said. "You are a wonderful woman, Miss Howard. Your mind equals your face, and that is beyond compare."

His tone had grown somewhat thick. Evidently the man was losing his self-control. My mind went back to that wild scene in the forest when Crowder and his men danced by the camp-fire. It was like this in some ways and yet so unlike. There the girl was as cold as ice and haughtily repulsed Crowder and his men, but here—I would not let my thoughts go further, only I was forced to see that now her company was different.

"It may be, Mr. Flournoy," said Clymer, "that we can find a queen."

"It may be so," replied Flournoy, "and I trust we shall not have far to look."

I do not know what stayed my hand. Perhaps it was some lingering hope that I was mistaken.

"Queens are born, not made," said the girl.

"One knows it when he looks at you," said Flournoy.

Now this was a bald compliment, but she

who had charmed me with her delicate grace took it without flinching, aye, as if she wanted more.

Flournoy now grew voluble. The fire that burned him mounted to his head, and his tongue flowed with the unceasing clatter of water pouring over a dam. Yet he talked well—much as I wished to have my hand upon his throat I was bound to confess it. There was in his nature a strain of poetry, or the breath of the forest, which may be the same thing, and he seemed to have set as a task for himself the enthralling of this girl.

He painted his rover's life in colours far more vivid than the real, yet the tale everywhere rang true. He told of green depths of the forest, trickling streams, feasts in the open by blazing fires and mad gallops, and she hung upon his words, her lips slightly parted, and her eyes alight, as if that too was the life for her. I was motionless, and the chaplain drank wine in silence. That man's capacity is to this day my wonder and admiration.

"And, too," continued Flournoy, "we are not wholly without the beauties and graces of life. There is poetry in the great woods and the mountains and the silent stars at night. And then often by the camp-fire in the still evening, when we have eaten and we rest, there is music."

"Music?" said the girl.

"Aye, music, and of no ignoble kind.—Clymer, go fetch your violin and show your guests what a soul you have within you, and what skill at your finger's touch."

The man arose without a word and left the room, his walk as steady as if water alone had touched his lips. He returned in a few moments with an old black violin, and sitting down in the glow of the fire-light began to play.

It was a sensuous, passionate air, some song of Italy, perhaps, but he was a master, and pure melody flowing from the strings filled every corner of the old house. I did not remember until long afterward that while the man played he kept his eyes firmly fixed on the girl's face.

When he finished she clapped her hands softly, and Flournoy was not slack with his praise.

"Did I not tell you?" he cried. "Where in all these thirteen colonies could you find a better musician?"

"Where did you learn it?" I asked.

"The most of it at Oxford."

"At Oxford?"

"Aye; my parents sent me across the seas to finish my education there and to take holy orders."

He laughed the laugh of a cynic, and I felt most unpleasant.

"Go on, let it be an evening of mirth," said Flournoy. "Something lively now."

He began an air of the dance, a wonderful quickstep, full of lilting measures and a swing as of silken skirts. I confess, too, that it made my own blood leap. I have loved the dance in my time, and almost unconsciously my feet moved to the tune.

"Some of us have danced by that," said Flournoy, looking into Miss Howard's eyes, "but it is a lady who could dance by it best,

say a forest queen dancing on the turf by the light of the silver moon."

"I think so too," she said.

"And you will show us how it ought to be done?"

"I will show you how it ought to be done."

She rose from her chair and stood erect, slender and tall, with the hot eyes of those men upon her. There was a spot in either cheek that burned like fire, and then she swayed like a flower moved by the wind. But she quickly recovered herself and began to dance.

There was but the flickering fire to light up the room—it had sunk somewhat, and now and then she was in the shadow—and only we three to see. But the music—deep, swaying, and with those thrilling chords that only the violin makes—steeped our senses, and the girl danced to it. She and the music were one, so perfect were they in accord. I saw now and then her face, in which the red spots still burned, but the long lashes were lowered over her eyes. Her feet seemed scarcely to touch the floor, so light were they. They twinkled

in and out, and now and then showed the faintest gleam of a silk stocking, while the soft rustle of her skirts was another note to the music.

The two men were as if enchanted; even he who made the music did not take his eyes from the girl, and perhaps I was as rapt as they. Flournoy no longer spoke. He was on the other side of the table, and he leaned both elbows upon it, his face in his hands, and watched her. No movement of hers escaped him. Tales of the cruel old days floated through my mind. I thought of a Roman general watching with covetous eyes the beautiful Greek slave as she danced before him. Then and there I took a resolution that whatever befell he should taste the edge of my sword, above all if he were the victor otherwise. All thoughts of Morgan and my duty to the cause were gone for the moment.

The fire, which we had forgotten to replenish, died down more and more, and the moonlight coming to take its place streamed in at the windows.

The girl's hair was shaken loose by-and-

bye, and fell down her back in a great mass—spun gold when the fire-light flickered across it, but shining like molten silver when bathed in the rays of the moonlight. And still there was the soft beat of her feet on the floor like the murmur of distant water as she danced and swayed to the music. A sudden great pity for her seized me. What right had I to judge of a woman, placed by no choice of her own in the midst of such trials?

The music died away in a long-drawn note like the sigh of a child, and the girl, falling into a chair, buried her face in her hands.

Then Flournoy came to life. He struck his fist upon the table and cried in a tone full of hateful exultation:

"You are the queen, the true forest queen, the only queen in the world for me! You shall ride through the forest by my side at the head of our band! You will come with me?"

"Yes," she replied, and now when she raised her face from her hands I saw that it had turned deadly pale. "I will come with you. But not now. Don't touch me! To-morrow!"

I had sprung to my feet and my sword was half drawn. But the table was between us. He, too, was standing, though most unsteadily, and he waved his hand as if he would push me back.

"You are too late, man!" he cried, a triumphant sneer appearing on his face. "You had your chance and you did not use it. You have lost, and you have only yourself to blame!"

"A word," said Miss Howard. "I demand a word before either of you says more."

"Ten thousand of them if you wish it, dearest one," replied Flournoy.

"I ask that you let Mr. Marcel go—to oblige me, you know. He has been my friend, and he has served me well. He is, perhaps, a little dull, but in view of what has happened I do not wish any harm to befall him through us."

Flournoy looked at me, and then he roared with laughter.

"Man," he cried, "you have doubly lost. She calls you dull! 'Tis the last rebuke a woman can give."

Then he turned to Miss Howard.

"Will it suffice if I let him go in the morning?" he asked.

"Yes, it will do," she replied.

I was still on my feet and my face was blazing.

"I will not take my life at such a price!" I cried.

"You are not consulted in the matter," she said, "nor need you be."

"That I know," I replied, "but I can put an end to this scoundrel here and now."

I drew my sword wholly from its scabbard, but she cried imperiously:

"Put up your weapon, Mr. Marcel. I am a free woman and I can do as I choose."

I looked straight into her eyes, but her gaze met mine so steadily that I could read nothing there. Then I put my sword slowly back in its place, and dropping into my chair, hid my face in my hands as she had done.

CHAPTER XIV

AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND

I WAS aroused by a touch upon my shoulder. It was Flournoy. The look upon his face was a most extraordinary mingling of triumph and anticipation.

"Why mourn, man?" he said. "You have lost, but you may win next time. I don't bear you any malice, and you shall go free in the morning. It is part of the bargain."

Then he swayed forward and fell in his chair. I looked at him, and again I was tempted to draw my sword and make an end of him at that moment, but some impulse of prudence restrained me. I was aroused from the contemplation of this man and his evil spirit by a light rustle, and when I looked up again the girl was gone.

The face of Flournoy fell forward on the table, and he seemed to be asleep. The ex-

chaplain was gazing at me with wide-open eyes, and the expression in them was so singular that I started.

"Come into the hall," he said in a whisper, but a whisper so distinct that it penetrated every corner of the room.

I obeyed instantly. It seemed to me that I detected a friendly note in the man's voice. Flournoy never stirred.

I stepped noiselessly into the hall and Clymer followed.

"Your room is here," he said, pointing to a door, "and Miss Howard's is yonder. There is a little good left in me, and I will help you; not for your own sake—I care nothing for you—but for that of the girl whom you now think so bad, but who is too good for you or any one else in the world."

I stared at him with amazement and dawning delight; that delight, I am happy to think, even to this day, was due not to the prospect of escape, but to a new faith in the girl, aroused by his unexplained words.

"She played a part, man—did you not see

it?" he resumed, "to drive away his suspicions and lull him to slumber."

"The house is guarded. What am I to do?" I asked. Just then I could not see my way.

"Go to your room as I tell you. Be quiet! Some of the men are stirring! It is midnight now. In about two hours come out and get the girl. Go to her room for her. There is a window at the end of the hall. Leave by that and go to the corner of the stable. Your horse will be waiting for you there, and another if I can get it."

The man's tone was compelling, and saying a brief good-night I went to the room indicated by him. It was a bare little apartment, its furniture only a bed, a chair, and a table, and the single window looked out towards the stable.

I lay down fully dressed upon the bed, and I kept my bare sword by my side. In my recumbent position I could see very well through the window, and mechanically I gazed at the stables and the forest, pallid in the moonlight. My head was throbbing with

the variety of emotions that I had suffered. Like master like man, I thought, and Flournoy was but the repetition of Crowder, though on a higher scale. The appetites were the same, and under vivid influences disclosed themselves in a similar manner.

There, too, was that singular being, the ex-chaplain. I could not wholly make him out. Was this, after all, a plot to get rid of me on the ground that I was trying to escape before the appointed time, an engagement that they meant should never be fulfilled? They would do it merely to save any scruples the girl might feel because I had served her.

My thoughts always came back to the girl. She was beautiful; that I had seen from the first, but never was she so beautiful as she danced there in the alternate flicker of the firelight and the moonlight. It was that spark of the devil that blinded and bewildered me and made me her slave more than ever. She must be conscious of her power, and that was why she, wicked creature! had used it upon us.

Then the words of the ex-chaplain in the hall came back to me—"She is too good for you or anybody else in this world!" Was she really playing a part? I thought of Flournoy with his dulled senses, leaning against the table, his cruel face hid upon the cloth. Clymer might be right, after all.

I lay upon the bed, and the two hours appointed by the ex-chaplain were hours of rest. I did not sleep; I could not if I would, but the throbbing in my head gradually ceased, and my strength grew as if for some great crisis.

Ten minutes before the appointed time, as nearly as I could judge it, I rose from the bed and, taking my sword in hand, began to fight an imaginary enemy there in the moonlight. There was no human figure save mine, but in fancy I put that of Flournoy before me, and I placed a sword in his hand.

Then we swayed back and forth, cutting and thrusting, leaping now to this side and now to that, and trying all the tricks of fence, until at last I slew him as I had slain Crowder.

Then I put my sword back in its scabbard, satisfied with this trial of strength. My

nerves were flexible and steady, despite the great strain that had been put upon me, and my eye was as keen as ever. I was ready.

I opened the door and stepped without noise into the hall. It was so dark that I could barely see there, and the house was still. I stood for a moment or two until my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, as I wished to make no misstep, and then I approached Miss Howard's door. I tapped softly upon it, but there was no answer. The ex-chaplain had lied after all, and she had not been playing a part! A fierce and bitter oath rose to my lips. But I did not turn back.

I tapped again on the door, but a little louder than before. No answer. A third time and still no answer.

I dared not knock with greater force, not knowing who might hear, and so putting my shoulder against the door I pushed with great force. The door swung in noiselessly, and I stepped into the room. The girl was standing erect against the wall, her hands thrown out as if she would repulse an enemy, and a wild look of terror on her face. I stopped, amazed,

her gaze was so strange. Then she flung herself forward, crying:

"O Mr. Marcel, is it you? is it you?"

"Why, yes," I said. "Surely you did not expect any one else!"

"Oh, no, but I feared—I feared——"

She hung for a few moments upon my shoulder, and I saw now that her eyes were red with weeping. All the strength and courage were gone from her, and she was like a little child. A great wave of tenderness swept over me. Whatever she may have done and whatever she may have thought, she now clung to me for help and protection, and I would be the veriest scoundrel not to give all that I could. Unconsciously I placed my hands upon the yellow hair, which still hung in long curls down her back, and stroked them.

"Don't be afraid, Julia," I said. "We'll escape them yet."

"Ah, I knew that you would never desert me whatever you may have thought of me," she said.

Then she changed suddenly. Some new

reserve of strength came to her aid. She stood erect again, the colour returned to her face and the fire to her eyes.

"Come, Mr. Marcel," she said, "let us escape at once from this horrible house. I hate it, every timber and brick of it! I could wish that a thunderbolt would blot it out to-night!"

"Aye," I said, "let us go; your wish is mine too, every word of it."

I spoke from my heart.

Her weakness did not return, and her hand resting lightly upon my arm we stole into the hall, my sword still in my hand and ready for use. But no one was there. The hall was as dark and silent as ever, only a mist of moonlight showing through the window at one end.

"Which way shall we go?" she asked.

She seemed to trust me absolutely. She had changed again, and changed wholly. She was once more the modest maid, captive though she was, who fled with me through the forest, and the Circe of the banquet and the dance was gone.

"Through the window there," I answered. "The man called the chaplain will help us."

"I thought so," she said.

I did not stay to ask her why, but led the way swiftly to the window. I opened it and looked out. I saw no guards. Evidently all the men about the house had gone to sleep, each supposing that their leader had set some one else to watch.

My heart swelled with a great exultation. I would go, and I would take this girl with me. It did not matter whether or not she had been playing a part. She should go because I chose to take her.

But she was as willing as I. She was now all docility and sweetness. I could not hasten enough for her.

"Do you hear anything?" I asked, knowing how acute are women's ears in moments of danger.

"No," she replied.

Then, without asking her leave, I took her in my arms and prepared to lower her from the window.

"Beware," she said, "I'm not so very light."

"I could carry you much farther," I replied, "and I'll prove it."

"Oh, no, you won't," she said hastily. "Set me down."

It was but a foot or two to the ground, and, lowering her hastily, I sprang out. We stood there a moment side by side, and a low, glad whinny came to our ears.

"It's Old Put," I said joyfully.

"A true friend," she added.

"The best in the world. You always know where to find him."

"Know where to find him?"

"Which means that he doesn't have two faces; he is always the same," I replied.

There was moonlight enough for me to see a deep flush overspread her face.

"You are unkind, Mr. Marcel."

"Not so much so as you have been."

"If I have done anything that seemed strange to you, it was to save us—and——"

"And what?"

"To show that I could."

She held her head proudly, and that wicked flash appeared for a moment in her eye like a fire-fly gleaming in the darkness, and then was gone.

I seized her hand in mine, and bending my head suddenly, kissed her on her white fingers.

"O Mr. Marcel, what do you mean?" she cried, and again she blushed.

"That man whom they call the chaplain told me that you were too good for anybody in this world, and he spoke the truth," I replied.

"Hush, do not talk so," she said. "Listen, there is the horse calling again."

Sure enough, it was the gentle whinny of Old Put, repeated like a warning, and I did not delay longer, knowing, too, from this that the horse was now outside the stable, and that Clymer had kept his word.

"Come, Julia," I said, and I took her hand in mine. "We shall soon be in the forest again."

"And away from that awful house," she said.

She looked back towards it, and standing

there in the moonshine I plainly saw a shudder shake her figure.

Then we swiftly crossed the lawn, or rather the neglected patch of weeds once a lawn, and approached the stable. I made out the dusky figure of Old Put as we drew near, and beside him stood another horse and a man. The man, I felt sure, was Clymer.

I was right in my surmise.

"Ah, you have her," said the ex-chaplain in a tone of satisfaction as we came near enough for him to recognise us.

"Yes," I said, "and thanks to you we shall soon be far from here."

Miss Howard at that moment uttered a cry, and her fingers, which still rested upon my own, suddenly closed down as if they were made of steel. A man, pistol in hand, was emerging from the shadow of the stable. I saw at once that it was Flournoy, and I have never seen deadly and murderous passion more plainly marked upon any man's face. Why he had revived so soon I do not know.

"Clymer, you traitor!" he said.

I saw in a flash our chance, and I saw, too,

that there was no fear in the eyes of the ex-chaplain. He had wheeled at the words, and he too with swift movement drew a pistol. His face in the malignity of its look was but little inferior to that of Flournoy. The good was gone out of him for the moment, and the evil was absolute.

I seized Miss Howard and fairly lifted her upon the back of Old Put. Just at that moment the two men fired and both fell. I would have stayed to help him who helped us, but I saw the look on his face as he fell, and I knew that it was no use. Moreover, I must think of the girl, as Flournoy's men would come running at the sound of the shots.

I snatched at the bridle of the other horse, but, frightened by the reports of the pistols, he ran away before I could reach him. Only Old Put stood faithful.

I smote Old Put sharply on the neck, and we dashed into the forest, I running by his side. I did not look back at the two men lying there on the earth, but I heard long afterwards that both died, within two hours, of their wounds. I think, too, that the tragedy

prevented any pursuit of us, as I saw no signs of it.

We pressed on far into the depths of the forest, and the girl bore up wonderfully. I offered after a while to stop and let her rest, feeling that we were safe from pursuit, but she said no.

"Every minute that we go farther from Harley Hall I am by that much the happier," she said.

I looked up at her as she sat on the back of Old Put, and her eyes met mine. She reddened once more from neck to brow with a vivid blush. Involuntarily she put up her hands and felt the long yellow curls as fine as spun silk which still hung about her shoulders. Then she began with fierce little movements of her hands to put them up again.

"Well, we are safe once more," she said defiantly.

"Thanks to your wit."

She was silent.

"And to something more than wit—to a courage that dared."

She was still silent, and I walked gravely

on by the side of Old Put, that great rush of tenderness that I felt for this woman enveloping me like a golden cloud. Nor did I forget when I looked up at the silver moon to offer silent thanks for this new deliverance.

Neither of us spoke again for an hour. Then she said:

"There was a time when you doubted me."

She was looking down at me with reproach in her eyes. I was silent for a few moments. Then I said:

"It will never be again."

CHAPTER XV

AS SEEN IN A DREAM

We were young and vigorous. The girl was tall, straight, almost as strong as I, and mile after mile dropped behind us. The air had the crisp, fresh coolness of a South Carolina winter, like a Northern day in autumn. The night passed. The sun rose from the mists, then, climbing steadily towards the heavens, shone in full splendour in an atmosphere as pure as that over the sea. We could see far to right and left and before us, but we beheld neither men nor horses, just the rolling hills and valleys and the straggling forest.

"So much the better," I said to Julia, "for the lonelier the country the less obstacle there will be to our flight. Morgan is retreating towards the Broad River, and as we have surely passed around Tarleton by this time, we ought to overtake him before night. I

hope he will have plenty to eat, for I think that you and I will miss our dinner."

"Do you know," said she, "I begin to wish that Tarleton will not catch Morgan? It would be an awful scene, and perhaps many of the rebels are good men after all."

"Perhaps."

"Couldn't the war be ended in some way without more years of fighting—by a sort of compromise? Suppose each side should give up a little?"

"We might make the proposition, you and I, to Congress and the king."

"Don't jest. I'm in earnest."

"Then I'm afraid there's no chance for a compromise, and there hasn't been for four or five years. Either we go free or we do not. You English like to boast of your courage and tenacity, and we make the same boast of ourselves. It has to be fought out to the end, win or lose."

"I am sorry."

She spoke truthfully, as she looked her sadness, but the wind soon blew it away, bringing back the sparkle to her eyes and the

rose-flush to her cheeks. We stopped about noontime to rest, and Old Put made use of the opportunity to hunt for green grass, stopping at times to look benevolently at us and to indicate that his state of mind was content. We were both hungry, but we had nothing better to do than to watch Old Put nibble for his dinner, which he did very industriously until I called to him and told him it was time to start.

Julia meanwhile was taking a good rest. She even slept a little, and once I saw her stir in her sleep and close her lips tightly together, as if she were living over again that scene of the night before. But we had not spoken of it now since the day came, and for the present I meant to keep silent about it, if she would. When she woke she looked around as if she did not remember, but in a few moments she smiled at Old Put and me, and said she was ready again.

She again refused to mount the horse, and we strolled on together. I felt safe now, and, coming to a cabin whose owner had been bold enough to remain and guard his own, I of-

fered to trade him the fine British coat I wore for any coat of his own, however old, provided it would hold together on my shoulders. He produced the garment and made the trade, by which he was a great gainer. He asked me no questions, differing therein from the country people of the Northern regions through which I had campaigned so long. However, he looked very curiously at the tall girl with me.

"You are American," he said to me just before we started.

"Yes."

"The lady looks English."

"She is English."

"It is very strange."

"You are right. It is strange."

Such were my thoughts as we walked away. The man, who seemed to live there alone, half hunter, half farmer, stood in his cabin-door and watched us until we passed out of sight.

I prevailed upon the girl to ride a while, but after an hour on horseback she dismounted again, saying she preferred to

walk. About the middle of the afternoon we met a farmer who confirmed my belief that Morgan had gone on towards the Broad River, though he knew nothing of Tarleton. An hour later, as we were passing through thick woods, some one cried out to us to halt. I almost sprang up in my astonishment, and the girl uttered a little cry of fright, for neither of us supposed anybody to be near, having seen and heard nothing, and Old Put, I suppose, was tired or dreaming.

"Stop," I said to Julia; "it may be friends."

Two men on horseback came from a position among the dense trees. They were dressed in rough homespun gray, and looked like Americans, the two facts together inducing the belief that they were militia scouts of Morgan's.

"An American and his lady," exclaimed the foremost, and then he said to me: "You are a soldier, are you not?"

"Yes," I replied.

"And on the way to Morgan too, I take it. Keep straight to the northwest, and you

will overtake him. We are good patriots also."

"Thank you," I said. "Morgan seems to keep a sharp watch. I hope that we shall overtake him before nightfall."

He had ridden very close to me.

"I don't think it, my fine fellow," he said. "We'll take good care of both you and the lady, for we are Tarleton's scouts, not Morgan's."

I saw then that the appearance and manner of the men had deceived me, but no thought of surrender to them entered my mind. I snatched at my pistol. The fellow, who was as wary as a panther, saw the movement and drew his own weapon. We fired almost at the same time. I saw him reel in his saddle, but not fall, and I was conscious of a thrill of pain in my head, followed by a heavy, crushing sensation, as if I had been struck by a hammer. I staggered, dropping upon my hands and knees. Consciousness left me entirely for a few minutes and then came back dimly, just enough for me to dream and to create events for myself.

In this dream I saw a girl with tawny gold hair and blue eyes raise a sword snatched from the fallen man's belt and slash at the second rider, who had drawn a cavalry sabre. The man, shouting with pain, dropped his sabre, clapped his other hand to his shoulder, and galloped after his comrade, whose horse, frightened by the shots, was running away with him. Both disappeared in the wood, and the girl, who stood for a minute or two watching, the red sword in her hand, seemed to feel sure that they would not come back, for she rushed to the wounded man on the ground and raised his head in her arms.

I watched her with a curious interest, this blonde girl who had been so bitter of speech at times, so strange of action at other times, and yet so much the master of herself. The man rose to his knees once, but fell back from weakness. His eyes closed almost, his face became very white, and there was blood on his hair. She raised his head and kissed his face, once, twice, and more, and begged him not to die. "Live! Live for yourself and for me, Philip, for I love you, my hero!" she said,

and a great bay horse stood looking and listening. She flew to a little brook she saw flowing through the wood, and bringing water in her cap poured it upon the man's face, while the horse nodded approval. Then she washed the blood out of his hair and bound up the wound with something white.

"No, Put, I will never leave him," she said. "I will never leave him, for he has saved me from death and worse, and I love him—I tell you I love him!" whereupon the great horse nodded his approval with extreme vigour.

I came to myself, and I was sorry that the dream was over. It was pleasant, very pleasant, and I was willing to dream on. I had a headache, but when I put my hand to the spot which ached I knew the wound was not serious—that it was nothing but a trifle. A bullet, clipping under the skin, had glanced along my skull and passed on, inflicting a slight concussion, like a heavy blow from a man's fist, but that was all. I had seen many men victims of similar wounds in battle as good as ever the next day.

"You are not going to die, are you, Mr.

Marcel?" tearfully asked the most modest and demure of blonde English maidens, standing before me.

"My intentions are the precise opposite," I replied. "I have so much to live for."

It is curious how rapidly the feelings develop under the stress of great hardships and danger. The three days that I had been with her were equal to three years of ordinary time.

"Would you bring me a little of that cool water to drink in your cap?" I asked. "I see that the cap is wet already, and it won't hurt it."

She brought the water, and I drank. It was as cold as ice and as refreshing as nectar. I have seen men lying on the battle-field begging for water as if it were the one great gift of Heaven to our kind.

I felt twice the man that I was a minute before. The girl was strangely quiet, even shy, and more than ever I believed it my chief duty to protect her.

"No, Julia," I said; "this rebel against the king means to live. So far from dying, I

haven't had anything more than a knockdown which has left a sore spot on the outside of my head and a little ache on the inside of it, but I can travel as well as ever. Here, Old Put is waiting for you. Get up and ride."

But she declined with indignation.

"I will not do that," she said. "You may be a rebel—in fact, I know you are—but you shall not walk while you are wounded. You must ride."

As I was still a little dizzy I yielded at last, though I did not like to do it, and rode for a couple of hours. Then, feeling as strong as ever, I dismounted and made Julia take her turn on horseback. But at the end of an hour she too dismounted, and we walked on together as before, not talking much, but happy. The sun was again retreating before the night, and the western skies were aflame. The light fell full upon the girl's face, and her beauty, splendid and glowing before, was tender and spiritual now.

"We shall be in Morgan's camp soon, Julia," I said, "and I shall have to resign my captive."

"I shall consider myself your prisoner until I am retaken by the English," she said.

I did not reply, but I was willing to accept my responsibilities.

Old Put, who was walking slowly behind us, after his custom, raised his head and neighed. It was not a whinny, but a loud, sonorous neigh that could be heard afar. It was full of meaning too. And a quarter of a mile ahead of us on one of the open ridges I saw the cause—a troop of a dozen horsemen riding towards us at a half-gallop. Old Put neighed again, long and loud.

"Ought we not to escape into the wood?" exclaimed Julia in alarm. "There is time yet. Those troopers may be English."

She did not seem to notice the oddity of a suggestion from her that she hide from the English, but I was confident.

"They are not English," I said. "They are Americans. Old Put knows his friends. Trust him."

In truth, the horse uttered his loud and joyous neigh a third time, and I had not the slightest apprehension, for it was impossible

to deceive Old Put when he was wide awake.

The horsemen saw us and quickened their pace to a gallop. As they approached I could recognise the Continental buff and blue, and, telling Julia that it was all right, we walked gravely on to meet them. Old Put, his demonstrations of joy made, followed after with equal sobriety.

They were dashing riders, those men, and their curiosity must have been aroused by the sight of the girl, for they came on at the long, swinging gallop of the good cavalryman, and quickly inclosed us.

"Good evening, colonel," I said to the leader, saluting. "I am happy to see you again and to join your command."

It was Colonel William Washington, the distant cousin of our great commander-in-chief, one of the finest cavalry commanders of our time, a fine, open-faced man of about thirty.

"Why, Marcel—Phil Marcel!" he cried in surprise; "is it you?"

"Yes, it is I, colonel."

"And the lady?"

"The lady is my prisoner, colonel, an English spy."

"Did she give you that wound on your head?"

"I said a lady, colonel."

Every hat came off, and there was admiration as well as respect in the bow that each trooper made.

"The lady carried the news of our most important movements," I said, "and I was compelled to hold her a prisoner."

"You have done well, Mr. Marcel," said my colonel.

I thought so too. Perhaps I had done better than I thought.

"Now that I have brought the prisoner in," I said, "I shall have to resign her into your hands, colonel."

"It will be for but a brief space, as the camp of Morgan is only three miles back. There are some American women in it who will take care of her."

"But I wish to remind you of one thing, colonel."

"What is that?"

"A lady cannot be shot or hanged as a spy, even though she be a spy."

He laughed the hearty laugh that I like to hear from a man.

"Have no fear," he said. "We are Americans."

Then he laughed again that deep, resonant laugh which I like.

"I shall send two men back with you and the prisoner, but I am on a scout to find Tarleton and ascertain when he is likely to attack us."

"Do we mean to make a stand?" I asked.

For the third time he laughed.

"Why, boy," he said, "you don't expect Morgan, who, with Arnold, was the hero of Saratoga, to run away, do you? He only wanted a little time to drill his men and get his grip on them, and now he's ready to welcome Tarleton to the fray."

"Then you will have Tarleton by morning," I said, and I explained all that I had heard or learned otherwise in my flight with the prisoner, to which he listened with an in-

terest that indicated its importance and made me feel mine.

"Good! Good, Marcel!" he exclaimed more than once. "This is precisely what we wanted to know. And so Mr. Tarleton is hot on our heels and likely to attack in the morning? Well, Philip Marcel, I think you shall see to-morrow as pretty a little battle as was ever fought on this continent, and neither Colonel Tarleton nor I nor any other can tell yet what the result will be."

Julia was standing by me, and her old spirit suddenly flamed up.

"I can," she said, "and I only hope that instead of falling in the battle you will be taken a prisoner, for to-morrow night your army will not exist."

"Miss Howard," said Colonel Washington, bowing—I had given her name—"we have more admiration for the ladies than confidence in their military predictions."

CHAPTER XVI

IN MORGAN'S CAMP

THEN we proceeded to the encampment, and Colonel Washington himself went with us, his plans being changed by my news. My head was buzzing with excitement. We were going to fight Tarleton at last, though with all the odds against us, numbers, discipline, and arms, while Tarleton himself had won his reputation as the ablest and most successful cavalry commander in the British service. We might again experience the disaster and disgrace of Camden, but Morgan was no Gates, and perhaps, on the other hand, we might equal the exploit of the wild borderers at King's Mountain, though it was a little too much to hope for that. Still we would fight, and to a young man it always seems better to fight than to run.

"Old comrade," I said to my horse, "we meet the enemy to-morrow!"

He nodded joyously and then looked gravely at the bandage around my head.

"It is nothing," I said. "I will take it off to-night. My head is well."

He nodded again, as if all his troubles were over.

The wife of Captain Dunn, of the South Carolina militia, was in the camp, a lady whom I knew, my distant kinswoman, and Julia was given into her charge.

"Take good care of her, Cousin Anna," I said. "Remember that she is my prisoner."

"Your prisoner, is she?" she replied enigmatically. "But remember, Philip, that the captor often becomes the captive."

"Cousin Anna," I said indignantly, "I hope you are not going to preach our defeat by Tarleton on the very eve of battle. It will have a discouraging effect."

"I said nothing about the battle. Go and attend to your work, Philip. I will take care of the girl."

To Julia I said: "We fight to-morrow, and I may not see you again."

Then I bent down and kissed her lips.

She replied very simply and earnestly:

"May you live through it, Philip!"

Cousin Anna's back was to us, and she did not see or hear.

I turned away and began to examine the camp and this field, destined to be the scene of a memorable battle, which was itself the opening of one of the greatest, most skilful, and most successful campaigns ever conducted on the soil of our continent.

We were on a long slope, consisting of several hills rising above each other like the seats of an amphitheatre, though at a much greater elevation, as the slope was so slight that it offered no impediment to the gallop of a horse. The men were gathering up fence-rails, which they were using for the camp-fires, and I noticed many old tracks of the feet of animals. To my question one of the soldiers said: "We are going to fight where the cows pasture. Don't you know that this army is camped on the cow-pens of a very worthy man named Hannah? And these rails are the last that are left of his pens."

Behind us flowed the wide, deep, and un-

fordable Broad River, retreat thus being cut off in case of defeat. I asked the meaning of this strange military manœuvre, which meant either victory or destruction, and again the explanation was ready:

"More than half of our men are militia, and you can never tell whether militia will run like rabbits or fight like devils. All early signs fail, and General Morgan says it's cheaper to have the river behind us and make 'em fight than to station regulars in the rear to shoot down the cowards."

Presently I saw General Morgan himself passing among the men and preparing for the expected attack in the morning. This was one of our real heroes, a fighter and leader and no politician, a man whom the great Washington esteemed and loved to reward. I had seen him at Saratoga and elsewhere, and his figure as well as his name always drew attention. Over six feet high and built in proportion, with a weight of two hundred pounds, and a large, fine, open face, he was a type of the true American, the best of all men in mind and body.

There was plenty of provender in the camp, and I gave Old Put a solid meal. I wanted him to be in good trim for the morrow, as he and I were to take our proper place with Washington's cavalry, to which we belonged, only a handful of men, but able and true and capable of doing great things in the nick of time.

There had been some question about the bandage on my head, which I wore as a precaution against taking cold in the scalp-wound, but I showed that it was only a trifle, and Colonel Washington rightfully remarked that such a slight hurt would only increase a man's efficiency on the battle-field. Then he told me to lie down on the ground and go to sleep; but I could not sleep just then, and with the freedom of our colonial armies I roamed about the encampment.

The camp-fires flared up in the cold January darkness. The men sat around them, talking and playing with old greasy cards or singing the songs of the hills and the woods. Some of the soldiers were asleep on their blankets or the bare ground, for we were

always a ragged and unhoused army at the best, and only a few of the officers had tents.

A sharp breeze came across the river, and the flames bent to it, their light flickering over wild, brown faces that knew only the open air, wind, rain, hail, or whatever came. Most of the soldiers still carried curved and carved powder-horns and bullet-pouches, inseparable companions, over their shoulders, and long, slender-barrelled rifles, so unlike the British muskets, lay at their sides.

Smoke rose from the fires and blew in the faces of the men, deepening the brown and giving them another shade of the Indian. A curse mingled now and then with the singing and the talk of the card-players, and from the borders of the camp came the stamp of the horses and an occasional neigh. In the darkness, half-lighted by the reeling fires, the camp became a camp of wild men, whose faces the wavering light moulded into whatever grotesque images it chose.

We were but a little army, only nine hundred strong, but many of us had come great distances and from places wide apart. An arc

of a thousand miles would scarce cover all our homes. There were the militia, South Carolinians and Georgians, raw troops, whom one can never trust; then the little remnant of the brigade that De Kalb had led on the fatal day of Camden, splendid soldiers whose line the whole British army could not break, the survivors now eager to avenge the disgrace their brethren suffered on that day; then the stanch Virginia troops, that we knew would never fail, and near them our two or three score of cavalrymen under Washington—a little army, I say again, but led by such leaders as Morgan, Washington, Howard, and Pickens!

Down the slopes the sentinels were on watch, but there was no fear of a surprise, for the scouts were just bringing in word that Tarleton could not come before daylight, and then, owing to the slope and the open ground, his approach would be seen for a great distance.

The new men talked the most, some about the coming battle, eagerly, volubly, others about things the farthest from it, but in the same eager, voluble, unreal tone. The vet-

erans were silent mostly, and already with the calm and hardihood of long usage were seeking the rest and sleep which they knew they would need.

A tall, thin man, with a wild face, whom I took to be one of the preachers at the great revival meetings so common on the border, rose in the midst of the camp and began to speak. Some listened, and some went on with the talking and card-playing. I could hear the rustle of the pasteboard as the cards were shuffled. He was a fighting preacher, for he exhorted them to strike with all their strength in the coming battle, and if they must die, to die like Christian heroes. He prayed to God for the success of our arms, then stepped from the stump on which he stood and disappeared from my sight. He fought in the front line of the South Carolina militia the next day.

I sought my own place in our troop and lay down upon one half of my blanket, with the other half above me. Old Put gnawed at some fodder by my side.

"Wake me up in the morning when you

see the first red gleam of the British coats, old comrade," I said, and, knowing that he would do it, I closed my eyes.

But sleep would not come just yet, and I opened my eyes again to see that the fires were dying and the darkness was sinking down nearer to the earth. Half the army were asleep already; the others were quiet, seeking slumber, and the steady breathing of nearly a thousand men in a close space made a strange, whistling noise like that of the wind. A flaring blaze would throw a streak of light across a sleeping soldier, showing only a head or a leg or an arm, as if the man had been disjointed. I would hear the faint rattle of a sentry's fire-lock and the heavy hoof of a horse as he crowded his comrades for room. An officer in dingy uniform would stalk across the field to see that everything was right, and over us all the wind moaned and the darkness gathered close up to the edge of the dying fires. Weakness overpowered my excited brain and nerves, and I slept.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BATTLE

I WAS awakened in the morning by the shoving of Old Put's cold nose, which said as plain as speech, "Rise, my master, and prepare for the enemy." Most of the other men were up, and the camp cooks had breakfast ready—bread, meat, and coffee. I threw off my blanket and began to eat with the others.

It was the misty region between night and day. The scouts told us that the British would soon be at hand, and by the time the breakfast had been despatched the rim of the sun appeared in the east, and the day was coming. Then the general formed the line of battle, and each of us took his appointed place.

On the first rise of the slope stood the South Carolina and Georgia militia, the raw troops, in a line about a sixth of a mile long,

under the command of the iron-nerved Pickens. They were expected to give way before the charge of the enemy, but Pickens was ordered to hold them in line until they could deliver at least two volleys with the precision in firing which all these farmer boys possessed. Then they were to retire behind the veteran regulars under Howard, who were on the second slope, one hundred and fifty yards in their rear. An equal distance behind the second rise sat we cavalrymen on our horses, commanded to pull on our reins and wait the moment upon which the fate of the combat should turn.

Thus stood our little army, expecting the rush of the battle which, as I have said, was to be one of the most important and decisive of our war. I stroked Old Put's neck and bade him be cool, but he was as calm as I and needed no such encouragement. The man on my left, Bob Chester, a Pennsylvanian, suddenly whispered:

"Don't you hear that faint rumbling noise, Phil? That's the hoof-beats of cavalry."

"Silence there!" called the colonel.

No one spoke again; but, bending my ear forward, I could hear the far drum of horses' hoofs, and I knew that the English army was coming. Old Put raised his head and snuffed the air. A red gleam appeared upon the horizon and broadened rapidly. A thrill and a deep murmur ran the length and breadth of our army.

"Oh, if those militiamen will only stand until the general bids them retire!" groaned the colonel.

That he believed they would not, I knew, since it is a hard thing for new men to stand the rush of a seasoned army, superior in numbers and equipment.

The sun was just swinging clear of the earth, and betokened a brilliant morning, yet it was cold with the raw damp that often creeps into a South Carolina winter, and I for one wished that the men could see a little more of the day, and loosen their muscles a little better before they fought.

The whole British army now appeared in the plain—cavalry, infantry, and field-pieces

—in a great red square. I could plainly see the officers giving their orders, and I knew that the attack would come in a few minutes.

"Eleven hundred of them and no raw troops," said Colonel Washington. "We know that exactly from our scouts. I think our cavalry will have something to do to-day."

One officer, in the gayest of uniforms, I took to be Tarleton, the British leader whom we hated most of all, for, with all his soldierly qualities, he was a cruel man, as most of his brother British officers themselves say.

I wanted to see the faces of those farmer boys down there on the slope who were to receive the first and fiercest rush of the enemy and to check it. I knew that many of them were white to the eyes, but their backs were towards me, and I could not see.

"They don't appear to move," whispered Chester. "Their line looks as firm as if it were made of iron."

"Like untempered iron, I guess," I replied—"break like glass at the first shot."

A bugle sounded in the front of the British squares, and its notes, loud and mellow, came to us, but from our ranks rose only the heavy breathing and the shuffling of men and horses.

The trumpet-call was followed by a cheer from more than a thousand throats, and then the British rushed upon us. The brass field-pieces on their flanks opened with the thunder that betokens the artillery, and mingled with the roar were the rattle of small arms, the throb of drums, and the clamorous hoof-beats of their numerous cavalry.

The face of their red line blazed with fire, their red uniforms glowing through it like a bloody gleam, while the polished bayonets shone in front.

"They are firing too soon and coming too fast," said Colonel Washington. "By God! look at those militiamen! They are standing like the Massachusetts farmers at Bunker Hill!"

It was so. The raw line of plough-boys never wavered. It bent nowhere, and was still as straight and strong as an iron bar. The

plough-boys knelt down, and, as the British cheer rose and the red line flaming in front swept nearer, up went the long-barrelled border rifles. I fancied that I could hear Pickens's command to fire, though I did not, and then all the rifles in a line a sixth of a mile long were fired so close together that the discharge was like the explosion of the greatest cannon in all the world.

The smoke rose in a thick black cloud, which a moment later floated a dozen feet above the earth and revealed the British squares shattered and stopped, the ground in front of them red with the fallen, the officers shouting and reforming their lines, while our own plough-lads, still as firm as the hills, were reloading their rifles with swift and steady hands.

We cavalrymen raised a great shout of approval, which the regulars on the rise in front of us took up and repeated. A second volley was all that we had asked from the militiamen, and it was sure now. Even as our cheer was echoing it was delivered with all the coolness and deadly precision of the first. Again

the British squares reeled and stopped, but they were veterans, led by the fiery Tarleton, and they came on a third time, only to meet the third of those deadly volleys, which swept down their front lines and blocked the way with their own dead and dying.

"The battle is won already," shouted Colonel Washington, "and it's the farmer boys of South Carolina and Georgia who have won it!"

Never did veteran troops show more gallantry and tenacity than those same farmer boys on that day. Two volleys were all that were asked of them, yet not merely once or twice, but many times, they poured in their deadly fire at close range, again and again hurling back the British veterans, who doubled them in number and were supported by artillery and many cavalry, while we old soldiers in the two lines behind stood silent, not a gun or a sabre raised, and watched their valour.

They retired at last, not broken, but in perfect order, and at the command of Pickens, that we who stood behind them might have

the chance to do our part of the day's work.

The smoke hung low in clouds and half hid both armies, British and American. A brilliant sun above pierced through it in places and gleamed on clumps of men, some fallen, some still fighting. Shrieks and groans strove for a place with the curses and shouts.

Again rose the British cheer from the throats of all those who stood, for, the militiamen retiring before them, they thought it was a battle won, and they charged with fresh courage and vigour, pouring forward in a red avalanche. But the regulars, the steady old Continentals, who now confronted them, received them with another volley, and more infantrymen fell down in the withered grass, more riderless horses galloped away.

The battle rolled a step nearer to us, but we cavalrymen, who formed the third line, were still silent and sat with tight reins, while directly in our front rose a huge bank of flame and smoke in which friend and enemy struggled and fought. Even Old Put, with his iron nerves, fretted and pulled on the reins.

The long line of the British overlapped the Continentals, whom they outnumbered three to one, and the general, whose gigantic figure I could see through the haze of smoke, ordered them to retreat lest they should be flanked.

Again the British cheer boomed out when they saw the regulars giving ground, for now they were sure that victory was theirs, though more hardly won than they had thought. But the retreat of the regulars was only a feint, and to give time for the militiamen behind them to come again into action. General Morgan galloped towards us, waving his sword to Washington, and every one of us knew that our moment had come.

"Forward!" was the single command of our leader, and reins and sabres swung free as we swept in a semicircle around the line of our friends and then at the enemy. At the same moment the regulars, ceasing to yield, charged the astonished foe and poured in a volley at close range, while the militiamen threw themselves in a solid mass upon the British flank.

We of the cavalry were but eighty, with fifty more mounted volunteers behind us under Major McCall, but we were a compact body of strong horses and strong horsemen, with shortened rifles and flashing sabres, and we were driven straight at the heart of the enemy like the cold edge of a chisel.

We slashed into the British, already reeling from the shock of the Continentals and the militiamen, and they crumpled up before us like dry paper before a fire. Our rifles were emptied, and the sabres were doing the silent but more deadly work. Amid all the wild din of the shouting and the musketry and the blur of the smoke and the flame I knew little that I was doing except hack, hack, and I was glad of it. I could hear steel gritting on bone, and the smell of leather and smoke and blood arose, but the smoke was still in my eyes, and I could only see enough to strike and keep on striking.

We horsemen, one hundred and thirty strong, were still a solid, compact body, a long gleaming line like a sword-blade thrust through the marrow of the enemy. We cut

our way directly to the heart of the English army, and their broken squares were falling asunder as our line of steel lashed and tore. The red army reeled about over the slope like a man who has lost power over his limbs.

I struck at a trooper on my left, but he disappeared, and a second trooper on my right raised his sabre to cut me down. I had no time to fend off the blow, and in one swift instant I expected to take my place with the fallen, but a long, muscular brown neck shot out, two rows of powerful white teeth inclosed the man's sword-arm, and he screamed aloud in pain and fright.

"Do you surrender?" I cried.

"Yes, for God's sake, take him off!" he shouted. "I can fight a man, but not a man and a wild devil of a horse at the same time!"

"Let him go," I said to Old Put, and the horse unclasping his teeth the man gave up his sword.

The smoke was clearing away somewhat, and the fire of the rifles declined from a steady crackle to jets and spurts. A dozen

of the militiamen seized one of the brass field-pieces of the British, and Howard's Continentals already held the other. Everywhere cries of "I surrender! I surrender! Quarter! quarter!" arose from the British horse and foot, who were throwing down their arms to receive from us that quarter which we willingly gave, but which Tarleton had so often denied to our men.

I could scarce believe what I saw. The whole British army seemed to be killed, wounded, or taken. The muskets and bayonets, the swords and pistols, rattled as they threw them upon the ground. Whole companies surrendered bodily. An officer, his gay uniform splashed with mud and blood, dashed past me, lashing his horse at every jump. It was Tarleton himself, and behind him came Washington, pursuing with all his vigour and lunging at the fleeing English leader with a bayonet fastened at a rifle's end. He returned after a while without Tarleton, but there was blood on his bayonet. Tarleton, though wounded in the shoulder, escaped through the superior speed of his horse, to be

taken with Cornwallis and the others at Yorktown.

The general raised his sword and cried to us to stop firing and striking, for the field was won and the battle over, and he spoke truly. Far away showed the red backs of some of the English fleeing at the full speed of their horses, but they were only a few, and almost their entire army lay upon the field, dead and wounded, or stood there our prisoners.

The defeat that so many of us feared had proved to be the most brilliant little victory in our history, a masterpiece of tactics and valour, the decisive beginning of the great campaign which won us back the Southern colonies, one of the costliest of all her battles to England. I have told you how it was, just as the histories, both English and American, tell it to you. All honour and glory to the gallant plough-boys of South Carolina and Georgia, who received the first shock of the British army and broke it so bravely! Of the eleven hundred British veterans who attacked us only two hundred escaped from the field, and

we took all their cannon, baggage, ammunition, and small arms, even of those who escaped, for they threw them away in their flight. The killed, wounded, and taken just equalled the numbers of our entire army, and we had only twelve men dead.

CHAPTER XVIII

LOOKING AHEAD

I RETURNED towards the Broad River, where, under the lee of a little hill, a tent held six or seven friendly women. Julia came out, her face still pale, for she had heard all the crash and tumult of the battle.

"It is over, Julia," I said—I had hid my bloody sword—"and the British army no longer exists."

"And the victory is yours! Yesterday I thought it impossible."

"Your countrymen make the same mistake over and over again, but they pay the price and they don't complain."

We walked towards the field, and we met some men bringing in a gray-haired prisoner, a tall, fine-looking officer. Julia, crying aloud in her joy, ran forward and embraced him. He returned the embrace again and again with the greatest tenderness.

"Father," said Julia, "we are now prisoners together."

I watched them for a few minutes, and then I stepped forward and said:

"Good-morning, Major Howard."

He stared at me in the icy way of the Englishman who has been addressed by a stranger.

"I do not know you, sir," he said.

"My name is Philip Marcel, and I am your future son-in-law."

He was now unable to speak.

"It is true, sir," I said. "Ask your daughter."

He looked at her. She smiled and reddened. But the light in her eyes was divine.

Old Put was standing by, and he nodded his head in approval. He had liked her from the first.

"Your daughter is to be my wife," I continued with emphasis, "and you are to live with us and like us."

These were resounding boasts for a young soldier to make, but they all came true after Yorktown.

THE END (1)

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00022346866